

Home Is Where The Spirit Is

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Contents

Introduction	3
The Medium is the Message	3
The Secret Doctrine	4
<i>Discontent: The Mother of Progress</i>	7
The Spirit of Revolt	11
The Nudes and the Prudes	14
Personal Afterword From Contributing Author	19

Introduction

This is an in-depth article about a commune called Home, just north of Olympia, Washington. It existed from the 1890s to the 1910s and was populated by a mixture of spiritualists and anarchists. While most of you may be familiar with anarchism, we imagine most of you don't know a thing about spiritualism. Those anarchists who live near Olympia might be familiar with the currents of occultism, spiritualism, satanism, crypto-fascism, and general new-age hippiness that flow through the area, and this article is an effort to provide some much needed clarity on several movements that influenced the twentieth century, for better and worse.

The Medium is the Message

Citizens of the United States sure love watching movies, and these days several million are familiar with two films by the same director, one called *Hereditary*, the other called *Midsommar*. The first one is about satanism and spiritualism, the second is about a commune. Oddly enough, all these topics collide in a place called Home, Washington State. Specifically, the anarchist commune of Home, a place where spiritualists, insurrectionaries, farmers, and mediums lived together in peace. The commune collapsed after the son of an anarchist betrayed his mother to the police and by 1920 there was almost no trace of this radical experiment and its embodied principle of total freedom. Only two books have been written about Home, both concentrating on the anarchists, not the spiritualists, and this obscure movement of psychics, mediums, and trance speakers has remained opaque to history. In the process of explaining how the anarchists and spiritualists of Home came together, we'll have to first reveal why the twentieth century became a living nightmare.

In the movie *Hereditary*, one of the main characters opens a box of her dead mother's belongings. In the box she finds a book titled *Notes on Spiritualism*. Along with a volume on the demon Paimon written in some ancient language and a book called *Invocations*, this *Notes on Spiritualism* is the main text used to identify what belief system the satanic conspiracy is adhering to. In the film, a cabal of white, middle-aged people use a nuclear suburban family to summon a king of hell into its one surviving member, a brutal saga that ends in total bewilderment. The film was a small hit against the blockbusters of 2018 and introduced millions to the Victorian-era movement known as spiritualism. This film wasn't a positive depiction of spiritualism, although fans seemed to love all the mediums, seances, spirits, and vessels. *Hereditary* presents all of these forces as real, an assertion the Victorian-era spiritualists would agree with, and we'd like you to read onward in this same spirit. For the length of this essay, pretend there was a material basis to the epic spiritualist revival of 1870 to 1939, an unprecedented event that ended with the Nazis invading Europe.

The final years of this spiritual upsurge are documented by Roberto Bolaño in his novel *Monsieur Pain*, a nebulous exploration of the occult underworld of pre-war Paris. As the late Ursula K. LeGuin described the novel, "its tortuous method of approaching the unspeakable reveals the face of evil without glamorizing it, as popular literature and film so often do. By indirection it avoids collusion." The main event at the heart of this book involved the Spanish fascist effort to poison César Vallejo, the Peruvian communist poet now exiled in Paris. In the process of discovering this conspiracy, the main character meets a spiritualist hypnotist who interrogates prisoners

for Franco's fascist government. The book ends sometime in 1938 with a sort of obituary for all the characters, revealing their various fates amid the impending slaughter. Ursula K. Leguin would go on to write that "from the seed of fact grows the great vine of imagination, twining and intertwining, casting shadow, bearing fruit, sometimes sweet, sometimes bitter."

Bolaño describes the final days of the spiritualist revival, a time when it had become fully militarized by the different world powers, and to understand how it began we need to go back to 1870 and the Franco-Prussian War. As a consequence of this fateful bloodbath, the first German Reich was created and the French Empire destroyed. Paris refused to give up its cannons to the new Republican state in Versailles, expelled the invading troops, and created the Paris Commune amid the ruins of war. Women like Louise Michel urged the Commune to immediately attack Versailles, viewing it as their one chance for survival, but they were outvoted and shutdown by the majority.

Among those who urged peace and restraint were the Masons, a group that followed its own spiritualist and occult belief system, and their grand folly was encapsulated in their suicide march to negotiate with Versailles carrying a banner that read *Love One Another*. They kept marching while being fired on by Republican sharpshooters and amid a trail of their own dead bodies they finally managed to convey their neutrality. After a small delegation of Masons was given an interview, they were told to go back to Paris and die with the others. When they returned from this futile undertaking, people like Louise Michel shook their heads and spit on the ground. Thanks to idiots like these Masons with their suicidal pacifism, it was now too late to save their Commune. According to the Catholic reactionaries outside Paris, the entire Commune was a den of satanists, and both anarchist and Mason were slaughtered together when the Republican troops invaded the city. Once the blood had dried, an era of peace descended on Western Europe, and it was within this peace that the spiritualist revival blossomed.

The Secret Doctrine

To be accurate, spiritualism technically began decades earlier in a most unusual place: the United States. It started in the late 1840s with just a handful of mediums and soon grew to encompass dozens of charlatans, performers, and genuine psychics. The brutality and carnage of the US Civil War further boosted this growing movement, with thousands of parents paying mediums to contact their dead sons. Similarly, the bloodshed of the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune evoked a desire in the bereaved survivors to speak with their dead. Into this psychic maelstrom came a woman named Helena Blavatsky, an individual destined to shape the twentieth century, mostly for the worst.

Born into the Russian nobility to a family of state functionaries in 1831, young Helena became interested in her family's Masonic connections and esoteric book collections. After escaping from an arranged marriage at the age of 17, Helena began a long journey across the planet. Given her family's connection to the Czarist government, it was likely she did this as a spy. Her travels took her to Turkey, Egypt, France, England, and then on to Canada. It was in Quebec that she ventured out into the still untamed wild-lands and tried to contact aboriginal medicine-people and glean their mysteries, only to be robbed by a band of indigenous outlaws. Despite this setback, she continued south across America, reached the Andes, and sailed westward to India and Tibet. She returned to the Russian Empire in 1858 and remained there until she began another world tour in

1864, a journey that would lead her back to Tibet. It was here in this mountain kingdom that she claimed to discover the *secret doctrine* that would go on to inspire her spiritualist work. No one knows if she ever made it to Tibet, but the search for ancient knowledge certainly made good cover for a spy.

Her travels eventually brought her to the birthplace of spiritualism, the United States, and it was there in 1875 that she created the Theosophical Society and the broader movement of Theosophy. Prior to this, spiritualists believed they were channeling lost souls stuck in limbo and generally didn't believe in reincarnation, stuck as they were in a pseudo-christian framework. It wasn't until Blavatsky's influence began to spread that spiritualists realized they could channel any soul, and from that moment onward all bets were off, as they say. Beyond this, Blavatsky is largely responsible for spreading Tibetan Buddhism and Hinduism across Europe while giving them an exoticism tinged with embellishments and fictions. Thanks to her, thousands of white people began to appropriate isolated pieces of ancient religions to suit their western needs, a process that continues today. It was also thanks to Blavatsky that the swastika was widely introduced to Europe as part of her Theosophic logo. To cap this all off, Blavatsky decided only certain people were human, while others were sub-human. While she may have granted Jewish people a human status, the tribes of southern Africa and Turkish people were considered sub-humans, and it was thanks to her that the idea of the Aryan race became popular in Europe.

Again, it's more than likely that Blavatsky was simply a Czarist spy with an unbelievably elaborate cover story. Through the late-1870s, more and more members of the European ruling class came to embrace spiritualism, allowing people like Blavatsky access to various salons and corridors of power. While she did utilize these connections, Blavatsky mostly spent those years in India creating chapters of her Theosophical Society. Relations between the British and Russian Empires weren't great after the Crimean War and the British were more than suspicious of what Blavatsky was doing in their colony. She remained in India until 1885, and by then over a hundred Theosophical groups were established across the country, enough to sow the seeds of future discord.

After a brief journey across Europe, she eventually settled in London. It was in this imperial metropolis that she met a lawyer named Mohandas K. Gandhi and he quickly became one of her disciples. In years to come, Gandhi would stir up trouble in the British colonies of South Africa and India, encourage the Jews to commit mass-suicide during the Holocaust, and enabled the rampant Hindu-nationalism that still plagues India. Like his master Blavatsky, Gandhi believed all religions came from the same source, although for him, the best religion was clearly Hinduism. For Blavatsky, not even Tibetan Buddhism could compare with the Russian Orthodox Church.

Blavatsky made another new friend in London, a woman named Annie Besant, and together they worked on a magazine called *Lucifer*. Besant had once been an insurrectionary socialist who fought on the street during the Bloody Sunday of 1887, organized the Match-Girl's Strike of 1888, and worked alongside Errico Malatesta during the Dock Worker's Strike of 1889. Later that year, Besant was asked to review *The Secret Doctrine* by Helena Blavatsky, a book that claimed to be based on ancient Tibetan Buddhist texts, and when she'd finished reading it, her entire life was changed. By 1890, Blavatsky was living in Besant's house and the two were editing *Lucifer*. Blavatsky died in this house in 1891, struck down by influenza, but Besant was committed to carrying on the work. She renamed *Lucifer* to *The Theosophical Review* and became a devoted member of the Theosophical Society, eventually rising to president in 1907.

Before she died, Helena Blavatsky claimed her entire Theosophical movement was meant to prepare for the coming of a great World Teacher, and Annie Besant carried this belief to her new home of India. In 1909, her associate found a fourteen year-old boy in Adyar and claimed this was their long awaited World Teacher. Against the wishes of his family, Besant and the Theosophical Society took young Jiddu Krishnamurti into their circle and told him he was the vessel for an ancient force that guided human evolution. With this circle of white skinned Theosophists at his back, J. Krishnamurti became the World Teacher they wanted him to be, as if he were only a vessel. Just like in the film *Hereditary*, this cabal of white, middle-aged spiritualists effectively converted a young man into the living embodiment of their long awaited savior.

Not every Theosophist was sold on the idea of J. Krishnamurti being the incarnation of a World Teacher, most notably Rudolf Steiner, founder of the same Waldorf School now beloved by spiritual-minded eco-liberals. Steiner was also the publisher of a German language newspaper called *Luzifer*, later renamed *Lucifer-Gnosis*, and it was in these pages that Guido von List first formulated a rune-based Germanic spiritualism that would come to influence the Nazis. Rudolf Steiner broke away from the Theosophical Movement shortly after J. Krishnamurti was crowned World Teacher and went on to create Anthroposophy, an esoteric movement that birthed contemporary bio-dynamic farming, also beloved by socially-minded eco-liberals. As you can see, the threads of this spiritualist rope are woven pretty tight, and so far we've revealed only a few.

J. Krishnamurti lived as the white people's World Teacher for over a decade, probably thinking he had them wrapped around his finger, although the truth was the exact opposite. Caught in this web of lies, J. Krishnamurti eventually made his way to Ojai, California where he would have the spiritual crisis that led him to reject his identity as World Teacher. In 1929, Krishnamurti broke from his white masters, told his followers to disband their organization, and renounced forever the ideas of spiritual hierarchy, gurus, cults, and secret doctrines. Despite his efforts, Krishnamurti remained a beloved figure of white spiritualists who congregated around his home in Ojai, most notably at the Krotona Institute of Theosophy. His former patron Annie Besant died in 1933, the same year the Nazis took control of the German state, and Krishnamurti would eventually die in Ojai in 1986.

In his 2009 novel *Inherent Vice*, Thomas Pynchon describes the atmosphere of Ojai in 1970: "There were plenty of signs to point the way to the Chryskylodon Institute. The high-rent laughing academy was located close enough to Krotona Hill to cash in on the mystiques of better-known spiritual facilities." When the main character of the novel tries to infiltrate this fascist-run Institute, he uses a hippie-spiritualist cover: "I believe...that just as chakras can be identified on the human body, so does the body of Earth have these special places, concentrations of spiritual energy, grace if you will, and that Ojai, for the presence of Mr. J. Krishnamurti alone, certainly qualifies as one of the more blessed planetary chakras." This type of vague spiritualism allows the protagonist to tour the Ojai facility and witness white mental-patients chanting OM under the supervision of fascists.

In this bewildering novel, Thomas Pynchon describes the harvesting of 1960s hippie-spiritualism by the forces of reaction, a process that's been in continuous operation since the 1800s. Helena Blavatsky harvested the mass-need for spirituality after the Industrial Revolution, a time when white people from Europe and the US were becoming disillusioned with their culture's toxic materialism and false promises. Coupled with the numbing and repressive effects of Christianity, the dead-ends of industrial progress contributed to the spiritualist upsurge and allowed Blavatsky to exploit this desire for a higher reality. She is largely responsible for the

European appropriation of Hindu mysticism and contributed to the contemporary phenomena of white people stealing pieces of other culture's spirituality and religion. Blavatsky used this rampant desire for spirituality as a cover for her activities as a Czarist spy, just as Aleister Crowley utilized it as a spy for the British Crown. The most successful harvester of this need for spirituality was Adolf Hitler and his Nazis who combined the existing spiritualist threads into a massive war machine. While there's no direct link between Blavatsky and Hitler, she concretely enabled what the Nazis did to the world, and all the facts backing up this assertion are publicly available.

Inherent Vice describes the collapse of the second spiritualist revival that began in the US with the Beat movement and mutated into the international hippie movement. Obscure texts written by Victorian-era charlatans were reprinted, Crowley became widely re-read, and the Beatles went to India just like Helena Blavatsky. Thomas Pynchon describes how all this vague and appropriated spirituality was used by the forces of reaction to re-invigorate capitalism and channel rebellion back into the market. Just as the industrial progress of the Victorian-era bolstered the desire for spiritualism, the expansion of US free-market capitalism during the Cold War fueled another upsurge. In our current moment, the new digital culture is fueling the latest spiritualist revival with its witchy-ness, wellness, yoga, crystals, and various conceptions of energy. Whether we like it or not, the desire for spirituality appears to be an organic, material consequence of the human condition, and ignoring this will only enable the Blavatskys and Hitlers of this world. Those who denounce spiritualism in the name of materialism are denying the material basis of spirituality, just as they deny the religiousness of their materialism. As we've demonstrated, the most effective harvesters of spiritualism have always been materialists, and if you'd like to keep reading about how all this connects to an anarchist commune in Washington State, just north of Olympia, we'd advise you to keep this in mind.

As one of Blavatsky's former disciples would later explain, "[Helena] taught me one great lesson. I learned from her how foolish, how 'gullible', how easily flattered human beings are, taken en masse. Her contempt for her kind was on the same gigantic scale as everything else about her, except her marvelously delicate taper fingers. In all else, she was a big woman. She had a greater power over the weak and credulous, a greater capacity for making black appear white, a larger waist, a more voracious appetite, a more confirmed passion for tobacco, a more ceaseless and insatiable hatred for those whom she thought to be her enemies, a greater disrespect for *les convenances*, a worse temper, a greater command of bad language, and a greater contempt for the intelligence of her fellow-beings than I had ever supposed possible to be contained in one person."

Discontent: The Mother of Progress

For her time, Helena Blavatsky was truly a liberated woman. She did as she pleased at a time when most women were very much the slaves of their husbands, fathers, brothers, and patriarchs. Her solid connections to the Russian aristocracy allowed her to flout the conventions of contemporary society, making her into something of an inspiration to other women she encountered. Over time, the spiritualist movement became filled with these liberated women who gravitated to the freedom it provided in a time of great repression, and by the early 1900s, the suffragettes, socialists, feminists, and anarchists were all linked to spiritualism, or at least over-lapped with it.

There are too many examples to cite, so we'll focus on a single woman named Lois Waisebrooker and explain how she came to live in Home, Washington.

Lois Waisebrooker wasn't her real name. She was born in 1826 to poor parents in upstate New York and by her mid-30s she'd already been through two marriages and become a spiritualist. Using the name of Lois Waisebrooker, she channeled various spirits as a trance medium and lectured to crowds on the spirit world, feminism, birth control, and the labor movement. Like other women of the time, Lois was attracted to the feminist and spiritualist movements because they allowed her not just an equal voice, but the chance to become a leader. During the 1880s, Lois came to embrace another movement, this one quite small, although its consequences would reverberate across the decades: eugenics.

To understand the widespread support for eugenics among radical Victorian-era women, it's helpful to consider the practice of forced marriage many of them were forced to endure. Not only did they have to marry men to whom they felt no natural sexual desire, they also had to birth their children. Outside of these forced arrangements, women were also taught to marry for money, another form of the same bondage. To the radical feminists of the Victorian-era, eugenics became linked with their ability to choose lovers freely according to biological desires, not the dictates of church, state, market, or society. For this reason, major feminists from Emma Goldman to Margaret Sanger embraced this growing body of thought, mostly for the worst. Among them was Lois Waisebrooker, an early supporter of a man named Moses Harman, the co-founder of the US eugenics movement.

In 1881, Harman became the editor of the *Valley Falls Liberal*, a local newspaper from a small town in Kansas. Two years later, Harman renamed the paper *Lucifer, the Light Bearer* and began to promote the rights of women, free love, free thought, anarchism, birth control, and something called eugenics. When he was arrested in 1892 for publishing 'obscene' material, Lois Waisebrooker came to his aid and edited the newspaper during his penal sentence. They remained friends for the next decades and Lois eventually made her way to a new anarchist commune in Washington State, a place called Home where it was said people could live freely, so long as they respected both the collective and the individual. In regards to the invitation Lois received, it should be said that only those connected with the radical and spiritual underground ever received this offer of free land for free people. This same network that let people into the commune also effectively kept out cops and spies, a filter that lasted until a son of Home betrayed his anarchist mother and ratted out some dynamiters, although before we get to that sad story, we have to bring up a popular US film: *Midsommar*.

Riding high on the buzz of his *Hereditary*, a director named Ari Aster released *Midsommar* in the summer of 2019. At the time of this writing, there are thousands of memes circulating the internet that utilize images from this film and it seems to have lit a spark in the collective hive-mind. At the start of the film, the horrible advice of a boyfriend leads his girlfriend Dani to ignore her mentally ill sister's cry for help. As a consequence, her sister kills herself and their parents, leaving Dani alone with a banal and typical US male. Little does she know that her boyfriend has already planned a trip to Sweden with his three classmates, one of whom grew up on a commune in the far-north where the sun barely sets. After she's invited, the film depicts a semi-egalitarian, earth-centric, anti-immigrant, eugenics practicing cult that has secretly selected these US students as part of a ritual human sacrifice conducted every 90 years.

By the end of the film, Dani's boyfriend has been instructed by the cult to impregnate a woman from the commune just before he's incinerated along with the other sacrifices. The last

images are of Dani smiling beneath her crown of flowers, having discovered something that now feels like home. The film opens with three pointless deaths in the US and culminates in a ritual sacrifice conducted on a Swedish commune, leaving the viewer to discern which society is worse. In short, *Midsommar* depicts a US woman suffering the misery of her modern culture, a condition that makes her vulnerable to joining a semi-egalitarian, earth-centric, anti-immigrant, eugenics practicing cult.

The film joins a long list of works that depict communes as places of horror, cult leaders, brainwashing, and captivity, a genre that emerged in the US during the early 1970s, around the time *Inherent Vice* takes place. Unlike previous US communes, those that emerged during the 1960s and 1970s were heavily influenced by LSD, a psychedelic compound promoted by the CIA until it was outlawed in 1968. Combined with the new spiritualism of the hippie movement, LSD proved itself to be an almost uncontrollable weapon, capable of deprogramming a mind from capitalist culture and reprogramming it according to a different morality. As the film *Midsommar* depicts, psychedelics are one the key tools used by the cult to disorient, destabilize, and brainwash Dani into joining them.

There wasn't any LSD at the anarchist commune of Home, Washington. There was never a cult leader. As far as anyone knows, there weren't any instances of sexual violence, assault, or exploitation inside Home, unlike most of the twentieth century communes. When the commune began in 1896, some of its founders built a wooden boat and sailed from Tacoma to an isolated bay of the Salish Sea where they found the ideal site nestled among the fir trees.

George Allen was one of the men on this boat, and he soon brought his wife Sylvia and their daughter Glennis to live there. According to Sylvia's grand-daughter, "they were weary of moving" and resolved to call this place Home for the rest of their lives, hence the name. Sylvia Allen had met George while attending the University of Toronto and she would later say, "my personal emancipation during my college years consisted of abandoning my corsets and refusing to wear rings in my pierced ears." She met her future lover at socialist and anarchist gatherings and they soon abandoned Canadian society for the unknown of Washington State, admitted into the US in 1889. According to nearly everyone, Sylvia rarely smiled and never laughed. Of the three families that first arrived, Sylvia's was the last to have their home built, given George was busy helping the others. Each family was given two acres, a practice that continued as more wanderers found their way to Home.

Another man who was on the boat was Oliver Verity, and by 1897 he'd started a newspaper called *New Era* that carried the following message in its first issue: "WANTED: printers, gardeners, shoemakers, and practical men and women in all the different trades, to unite their labor and capital in establishing industries that will retain for the workers the products of their labor." In the spring of 1898, there were now twenty-three residents and they soon founded the Mutual Home Association which would "assist its members in obtaining and building homes for themselves, and to aid in establishing better social and moral conditions." That same year, the first journalist arrived at Home and would later write that "society stands in no danger from [these anarchists], save from being talked to death."

Copies of *New Era* traveled across the radical underground and one of them made its way into a saloon on the Barbary Coast, the red-light district adjacent to San Francisco's rebellious Latin Quarter. It was here in 1898 that a down-and-out printer named Charles Govan found the original call-out and resolved to move north to Home. When he got there, *New Era* was no longer being published, so Govan built a wooden shack, bought a printing press, and began to print another

anarchist newspaper: *Discontent: The Mother of Progress*. This explicitly anarcho-communist paper pledged to “battle for the freedom of the human race from tyranny and superstition of all kinds and sorts.” In their homes, every commune member lived as an anarchist individualist, but when there was a common task, everyone lived as an anarcho-communist, and *Discontent* reflected this perfect balance.

While never claiming to be the official organ of Home, the newspaper included many different voices from the commune on topics such as politics, religion, economics, and sex. *Discontent* also reprinted other articles from distant authors, such as E.C. Walker’s “Fashion Among Free Lovers,” originally published in *Lucifer, the Light Bearer*. Another regular contributor was F.A. Cowell, an anonymous author from San Francisco who wrote snarky news columns in a sarcastic anarchist voice and also used their name to sell Home’s chickens through a magazine called *The Pacific Poultryman*.

When the anarchist newspaper *Firebrand* was broken up in Portland, Oregon, half of its editorial crew went south to San Francisco, while the other half settled in Home and helped with *Discontent*. The commune had a party every Wednesday where issues of *Discontent* were folded and stuffed into envelopes before being put in the mail and sent across the country. A regular column called “Association Notes” informed its distant readers of what was happening at Home: blackberry picking, salmon catching, singing classes, woodworking, and revelry, among other things.

In late 1898, the Dadisman family arrived at Home and soon purchased an additional 64 acres for the commune. When this land was offered to newcomers in the pages of *Discontent*, it was described as “especially advantageous for residences as it commands a fine view of the bay and surrounding country.” When the Dadismans arrived, there were around fifty residents, among them the Adams family, a clan of committed spiritualists and anarchists. During the first decade of Home, various residents practiced Hatha-Yoga, studied Esperanto, discussed eugenics, held séances, and had a spiritualist meeting three times a week at the house of Mary Parker, a noted poultry farmer.

While the editorial crew of *Discontent* distributed insurrectionary anarcho-communist propaganda across the US, other commune residents practiced the craft of slate writing, an act now famous for its depiction in the film *Hereditary*. Put simply, slate writing occurs when one or several mediums channel a spirit onto a slate chalkboard and allow it to write messages. It was first popularized by a man named Henry Slade and his abilities won the approval of Helena Blavatsky herself, earning his craft a long future in the spiritualist underworld.

In the spring of 1900, a new arrival from San Francisco named James Morton lectured almost half the commune on the “unity of purpose between Theosophy and anarchy,” an event that was later described as “one of the pleasantest [in] the history of Home.” This was the context Lois Waisebrooker stepped into when she arrived in early 1901 at the age of 75. Lois was so well liked that residents of Home built her a wooden house and supported her monthly paper *Clothed with the Sun*. Lois fit right in with her spiritualist trance-medium abilities and individualist anarchist beliefs, with her paper described by one resident as not “just balmy – it was scorching, it even blistered the type that printed it!” Enrico Travaglio, the author of these words, also referred to Lois Waisebrooker and her co-editor Mattie Penhallow as “faded nymphs.”

Mattie Penhallow was the spiritualist postmistress of the Home post office, a position that allowed *Clothed with the Sun* and *Discontent* to be mailed directly from the commune, while the new main editor of *Discontent* was James Morton, an anarchist and spiritualist, and he reflected

the hybrid nature of the commune at the turn of the 20th century. By September of 1901, there were over 80 people living at Home, each respecting the widely different beliefs of each individual, and they all came under attack from the outside.

On September 6, 1901, a Polish anarchist named Leon Czolgosz shot President McKinley in Buffalo, New York, triggering a wave of national repression against the anarchist movement. In his confession to the authorities, Czolgosz said, “what started the craze to kill was a lecture I heard some time ago by Emma Goldman...she set me on fire.” The authorities soon rounded up Emma Goldman and dozens of anarchists across the US, claiming they all belonged to the same conspiracy. Three years before, Emma Goldman gave a series of lectures at Home, the first of many visits, and this connection almost inspired an anti-anarchist witch-hunt. After a series of blood-thirsty articles were printed in the daily Tacoma newspapers, a mob of patriotic psychopaths booked ferry passage to Home and would have burned the commune down if the captain hadn’t pretended to have engine trouble in the middle of the Salish Sea. As it turned out, the ferry-boat captain, a man named Ed Lorenz, was friends with the local anarchists. Thanks to him, a bloody massacre was narrowly avoided.

In her autobiography, Emma Goldman wrote the following words about her 1898 lectures at Home: “I delivered several lectures before [the spiritualists], but at the subject of Free Love even they balked. Evidently the spirits continued in heaven the moral standards they had set during their embodiment.” In contrast to Lois Waisebrooker, Emma Goldman wasn’t a believer in spiritualist mysticism, although both of them shared a passion for the emerging philosophy of eugenics and were readers of *Lucifer, the Light Bearer*. According to one historian, Emma later called Home “the anarchist graveyard” for its slow pace of life, although this never stopped her from visiting. By 1901, she’d only been there twice, and the entire commune would suffer for hosting this *High Priestess of Anarchy*.

While she was still in a Chicago jail cell, three editors of *Discontent* were arrested for spreading obscene material in their paper. After these men were bailed out pending trial, the postal authorities attempted to suppress their newspaper and refused to mail it. More indictments for obscenity were written against other commune members, this time against Lois Waisebrooker and Mattie Penhallow, the editors of *Clothed with the Sun*. After months of trials, Waisebrooker became the only anarchist of Home to be convicted of a crime after McKinley’s assassination. This spiritualist trance-medium was fined \$100 for publishing obscene materials and the Home post office was permanently closed. In the spring of 1902, after losing all its money in legal costs, the final issue of *Discontent* was printed, bringing the first phase of Home’s existence to a close. Waisebrooker left the commune in 1904, lived in Denver for a few years, and then died in Antioch, California in 1909, a penniless vagabond who conversed with the spirits.

The Spirit of Revolt

Unlike the commune depicted in the film *Midsommar*, residents of Home didn’t practice a eugenic breeding program or murder outsiders in their rituals. After she left the commune of Home, Lois Waisebrooker published a book in 1907 called *Eugenics; or, Race Culture Lessons*, a series of lectures she’d given over the years. At the end of the first lesson, Waisebrooker wrote that “this revolt against motherhood [is] an unconscious but real protest against a system so destructive of human life that one-half the children born die before they are five years of age, and

also against the savagery of war and the diseases coming from the prostitution of women...this instinctive protest is evolving into a conscious, an intelligent protest, as is evidenced in the formation of eugenic societies for the study of the law of human generation.” The same year she published these words, *Lucifer, the Light Bearer* was renamed *The American Journal of Eugenics*.

In her one book dedicated to eugenics, the only breeding program Lois Waisebrooker suggests is the natural, mutual, and free desires of two people. She is against eugenic laws enforced by the state, in any form, and her book focuses on the conditions of contemporary women far more than breeding. This was the type of eugenics supported by Emma Goldman and other anarchists of the time, a eugenics that aimed to alleviate the suffering of working mothers trapped in the abyss of poverty. If this could be considered the fringe left-wing of eugenics, the mainstream right-wing of eugenics included a book called *The Blood of the Nation: A Study in the Decay of Races by the Survival of the Unfit*, written in 1901 by the president of Stanford University, David Starr Jordan. In this text, the author argues that each race carries specific traits in its blood and that some races are superior to others, a common proto-fascist belief shared among liberals and conservatives of the time. This mainstream eugenic logic was used to justify the new US imperialism that spread to Puerto Rico, Cuba, Guam, Hawaii, China, and the Philippines, a convenient mythos for its massacres and genocide. Compared to this state-sanctioned eugenics, the anti-state versions of Lois Waisebrooker and Emma Goldman seem fairly benign, although not completely.

The sentencing of Lois Waisebrooker for obscenity in 1902 marked the high-point of spiritualist and eugenic influence in the Home commune. Faced with a state apparatus determined to demonize them, the anarchists became much more militant, especially after the passage of the Anarchist Exclusion Act in 1903. Theosophy, spiritualism, and eugenics were overshadowed by free speech fights, the anarchist labor movement, illegalist anarchism, organizationalist anarchism, anti-organizationalist anarchism, and a host of other pressing issues. The rampant exploitation, poverty, and industrial pollution of the 1890s continued into the 1900s, driving thousands away from capitalist society and towards the vast constellation of alternatives, including the one at Home.

Dozens of commune residents continued to be both anarchists and spiritualists throughout this period, most notably the Adams family, and a monthly newspaper called *Spirit Mothers* was published by a woman named Olivia Frelove Shepherd. After the demise of *Discontent*, the spiritualist anarchist James Morton (a friend of W.E.B DuBois) began to print *The Demonstrator* in 1903, just months after the passage of the Anarchist Exclusion Act. That same year marked the completion of Liberty Hall, a massive wooden schoolhouse, performance hall, and print shop that would stand until it burned to the ground, an event that marked the commune’s end.

In the film *Midsommar*, the main character Dani eventually joins the commune cult and sacrifices her former boyfriend in a fire ritual. As he burns, so does the last trace of the alienating world she came from. Over a century before this film was made, a woman named Gertie Vose fled the alienation of her own society to live at Home, and her story spans the rise and fall of this anarchist commune.

In 1897, Gertie was living at another commune near Scio, a small town in eastern Oregon, and it was here that she first met Emma Goldman after organizing a lecture stop for her national tour. Emma had read Gertie’s columns in *The Firebrand* and *Free Society*, two papers run by the Isaak family. After *The Firebrand* was shut down for obscenity, half of the editors went to Home, while the Isaaks went to San Francisco where they began publishing *Free Society*. They eventually moved this paper to Chicago and were arrested in 1901 along with Emma Goldman and an

anarchist named Enrico Travaglio, charged with conspiring to murder President McKinley. It's unclear what Gertie was doing in 1901. Her son Donald was still a young child, and she appears in Home around late-1903, a single mother committed to the great idea of anarchism. By the winter of 1904, she'd taken a job in a Tacoma mansion as a domestic servant, a job she came to despise.

That same year, Gertie wrote in the columns of *The Demonstrator* that in Tacoma she was "among the Christians and feeling a little worse for the yoke...If there is anything that would have tendency to warp one's judgment in favor of our dear little land of homes, it would be a case of seeking an opportunity to serve the plutocrats. It may be a needed step in our development. If one gets a bit out of sorts at Home just let them get outside and brush up against the powers that be...I long for dear Mother Nature's charms—the woods, the vales, and running brooks, and the songs of wild birds, in short, to wander free as the wind. The ambition for gold, with all its corrupting powers, may wear the imperial robes and crowns, but give me rapturous thrill of love—love for all nature's charms."

Gertie's dear little land of homes was a place Lois Waisebrooker might have described as a refuge to "escape the vibrations which come from the horrible places with which earth is dotted." If one chose to work for money in Home, the hourly wage was twenty cents an hour. The general store accepted both money and produce as barter. Most of the residents fed themselves off their own land and the bounty of Salish Sea shellfish that lined the shoreline. In 1905, the year spiritualist anarchist James Morton left the commune, there were 120 residents and several dozen houses. That year also birthed the Industrial Workers of the World, or IWW, an organization with thick roots connecting it to Home.

The founding convention of the IWW was covered in *The Demonstrator* by a man named Jay Fox, a veteran of the Haymarket Riot who was arrested in 1901 for conspiring to kill President McKinley. While living in Chicago, he regularly wrote and mailed articles to Home for publication in their paper, it being the only English language anarchist newspaper in the US at the time. Just before James Morton left Home, he suggested the Chicago anarchists take over *The Demonstrator*, given it would be cheaper to print. Half of the Chicago anarchists voted to absorb the newspaper, while the other half doubted the use of this "backwoods" publication. In the end, Jay Fox took over editorship of *The Demonstrator* and Lucy Parsons began to publish *The Liberator* from Chicago.

With their local newspaper now edited from thousands of miles away, residents of Home grew familiar with the IWW, given the bulk of *The Demonstrator* was now devoted to covering it. At the end of 1905, a bomb exploded at the home of Idaho's former governor, killing him instantly, and within months the authorities had arrested three radicals as suspects. Among them was the infamous 'Big Bill' Haywood, a prominent organizer of the IWW, and the pages of *The Demonstrator* chronicled this lengthy court battle. When the trial began in 1907, a Slovenian anarchist named Al Klemencic gave a lecture at Home about the brutal mining conditions that led to the Idaho bombing, evoking tears from the audience. Klemencic had been an active member of the San Francisco anarchist movement before heading off to Hawaii, Colorado, and then Chicago. After acting as a delegate in the IWW's founding convention he went on to become an editor of *The Liberator* and, according to Lucy Parsons, his job was to report "upon the labor movement in the middle west."

In 1907, a militant anarchist from San Francisco named Laurent Casas arrived at Home, bringing with him a newspaper called *The Emancipator*. Casas had been a member of the Germinal Group in San Francisco, a French speaking-collective that also collaborated on *La Protesta Hu-*

mana and produced translations of its Italian language articles. In 1906, he became editor of *The Emancipator*, an English language newspaper that ran articles about the Partido Liberal Mexicano, or PLM, the anarchist party that fought the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz. The Great Earthquake and Fire of 1906 destroyed almost all of old San Francisco, along with its anarchist press, and *The Emancipator* was folded into *The Demonstrator* with Laurent Casas moving north to Home as editor. Following behind was Enrico Travaglio, the Italian anarchist who'd been arrested in 1901 along with Emma Goldman for the assassination of President McKinley.

Enrico Travaglio was one of the most influential of the San Francisco anarchists and had published the Italian language *Secolo Nuovo* for a decade until the Great Fire destroyed his printing press. He moved east to Stockton and started another newspaper called *La Terra*, an anarchist publication aimed at local immigrant farm workers, only this effort didn't last for long. In 1909, Enrico left California and moved to Home, bringing the rebellion of the Latin Quarter to the gray skies and green horizons of the Salish Sea. His arrival marks the end of Home's second phase and the beginning of its final days. As you've undoubtedly noticed, the focus of the commune had shifted from individualist anarchism, spiritualism, eugenics, and Theosophy towards the open and violent class war raging across the US. Nevertheless, for every two anarchist militants at Home, there was always a spiritualist whispering in their ear about the "dark vibrations of the urban centers."

The Nudes and the Prudes

While the commune of Home was completely different than the commune depicted in *Midsummer*, it does share certain similarities. For example, residents of Home were fond of dancing, singing, playing music, harvesting local herbs, swimming in the nude, and staging pageants in mid-summer. Unlike the fictional commune, no one was ever forced to be there. Compared to the hypocritical morals of late-Victorian society, the freedom allowed at Home was truly liberating. Residents were allowed to be trans, polyamorous, or whatever else they wanted to be, so long as they didn't impose their beliefs or values on another individual. This perfect balance between the collective and individual lasted nearly fifteen years until a small minority of Home residents decided to impose their values on the majority, a conflict that began the slow disintegration of the commune. While it may seem surprising, this conflict was triggered by something completely innocuous: skinny-dipping.

In 1908, *The Emancipator* ran its final issue and Home was left without a newspaper once again. This gap in publications was filled when Jay Fox finally arrived from Chicago with his wife Esther and two children from a previous marriage. Esther Abramowitz was a Russian Jew who fled the Czarist Empire to become a committed revolutionary in the industrial United States, a passion she shared with Jay Fox. They moved into a little house overlooking the Salish Sea, the commune of Home now filled with over two hundred residents. By 1910, they established another printing press where they published *The Agitator*, a paper that aimed to boost the IWW over the pro-capitalist and reactionary American Federation of Labor. Whenever a subscriber wished to remain anonymous, they were listed by the editors as "fellow slaves." Copies could be found in Australia, New Zealand, Britain, and across the US. *The Agitator* was in every IWW branch office and its columns on Mexico were cited by mainstream daily newspapers as a fresh

source of facts. Jay Fox was preparing the first issue of this paper when a powerful bomb went off in Los Angeles.

On October 1, 1910, a massive explosion ripped through the headquarters of the *Los Angeles Times*, a virulently anti-union paper. The dynamite blast ignited the gas-pipes and flammable ink barrels in the building, resulting in twenty-one people dead with over a hundred injured. The next day, the mayor of Los Angeles hired the Burns Detective Agency to track down the bombers, an effort aided by a dozen spies embedded in the labor movement. Within a month, William J. Burns had tracked the source of the dynamite to the anarchists of San Francisco and moved his investigation north to Tacoma in pursuit of a man named David Caplan, rumored to have once lived at Home. Burns set up a base in Tacoma and by November his agents were creeping around the commune posing as surveyors, a cover they used to monitor the comings and goings of Jay Fox, an associate of David Caplan who'd recently traveled to San Francisco.

While these agents stalked through the woods and spied on the commune, bomb after bomb went off across the US, part of the uninterrupted class-war that had raged since the Haymarket Riot. In January 1911, the PLM, the IWW, and various anarchists seized the border town of Mexicali and over the next months their small army took over Tijuana, Encenada, and Tecate. This event is widely acknowledged to be the first uprising of the Mexican Revolution. From the small commune of Home to the commune of Tijuana, all of these anarchists were connected in fiery ribbon that stretched along the Pacific coast. Burns eventually pulled his agents out of Home after the MacNamara brothers were arrested for the Los Angeles bombing in April 1911, although the commune was now doomed to repression.

David Caplan remained a wanted man and spent the next years living in a small town on Bainbridge Island, just across the water from Seattle. Under a false name, he made his living as a barber. As the anarchist Lucy Robbins Lang would write, "one day Flora Caplan stepped off the boat [from Tacoma] with her two children. Flora and David Caplan, old friends of ours, had owned a grocery store in San Francisco, and had been so wrapped up in each other and the children and the business that I had felt they were lost to the radical cause. Now I learned to my amazement that Dave was suspected of having had a share in the blowing up of the *Times* Building. Flora knew only that he had been warned that he was under suspicion and that he had gone into hiding. She could not see how she was going to take care of the children, and she was afraid that she might be pregnant." Flora and her children lived in Home and would occasionally see David when he managed to sneak in at night through the woods.

It was exceptionally hot the summer of 1911, and as usual, the residents of Home went skinny dipping in the saltwater sea. Thanks to its open and trusting nature, a variety of nude-phobic people had made it into Home and they promptly reported their neighbors to the sheriff for the crime of indecent exposure, causing Stella Thornhill, Anton Zoncaneli, Anna Falkoff, and Stella Rosnick to be arrested for indecently exposing themselves. At their trial in July 1911, fellow residents of Home testified against them, and when someone cheered Stella Thornhill's conviction and fine, a "lively free-for-all-fight" ensued inside the courtroom. Another resident of Home named Adrian Wilbers was charged with the same crime and in court he was accused of being the one-time lover of Emma Goldman, forcing him to say, "I never lived with her as her husband and our relations were merely friendly."

Before the trial began, Jay Fox ran an article in *The Agitator* called "The Nudes and the Prudes" which made clear the lines being drawn at Home. In those columns, Fox wrote that "pollution cannot escape pollution and the polluted mind that sees its own reflection in the nude body of a

fellow being and arises early in the morning to enjoy the vulgar feast, and then calls on the law to punish innocent victims whose clean bodies aroused savage instincts, is not fit company for civilized people and should be avoided.” For writing these words, Jay Fox was arrested in August 1911 and remained in a Tacoma jail cell until a Washington State Senator stood as surety for his \$1000 bail. With the aid of this secular ally, Fox remained free until his trial in January 1912, an event that triggered a small war at Home.

It might just be a coincidence that this conflict started right after the anarchist bomber David Caplan was traced to Home, although it certainly consumed the energy of the entire commune. The “Nudes” refused to help or trade with the “Prudes,” effectively boycotting their existences at Home. In response, the “Prudes” attacked several “Nudes” in the street, destroyed their orchards, and blew up one of their shacks. The “Prudes” had found an ally in the local sheriff and they eagerly awaited his testimony against Jay Fox on January 12, 1912. In his own defense, Fox told the court that “it is only by agitation that the laws of the land are made better. It is only by agitation that reforms have been brought about in the world. If the waters of the bay were not agitated, it would become a polluted pool and would soon kill us all.”

The jury deliberated for two days before reaching a verdict of guilty for the crime of “editing printed matter tending to encourage disrespect for the law,” although they did ask for leniency. Fox smiled at the jury’s decision, appealed the verdict, and the local sheriff was fired the next day for fomenting a violent conflict at Home. When he turned in his badge, the sheriff told a reporter, “I am going to fix the parties that done the job.” It’s possible this sheriff was payed by the Burns Detective Agency to foment this schism at Home, but it might be just a coincidence. Either way, his end as sheriff allowed the commune to drive out the “Prudes” and return to a normal life, at least for a while.

In late-1912, an anarchist named William Z. Foster arrived at the Home commune and stayed in the house of Jay and Esther Fox. Foster had participated in the IWW’s free speech battle in Spokane and was now forming his Syndicalist League of North America, an organization that “bored from within” established unions rather than fight them externally like the IWW. When he arrived at Home, Foster had just finished a cross-country “hobo tour” that helped revive the Illinois Central railroad strike, a bloody conflict that inspired Joe Hill’s famous song Casey Jones, the Union Scab.

Within months, Foster had convinced Jay Fox to relocate his newspaper to Chicago and in November 1912, *The Agitator* ran its final issue. Fox left his wife Esther, moved across the country, and started a new paper called *The Syndicalist*. Esther married William Foster during Fox’s absence and the three would remain friends for the rest of their lives. *The Syndicalist* only lasted until September 1913 and when Jay Fox returned to Home his ex-wife and her new lover had left the commune for good, although they did stop by to visit. In the coming decades, Foster and Esther would organize the Great Steel Strike of 1919, join the Communist Party, and when Foster died in Moscow in 1961, Nikita Khrushchev and the Soviet high-command stood guard over his body before it was buried in the Kremlin wall alongside “Big Bill” Haywood and John Reed. All of them had once belonged to the IWW, and like William Z. Foster, “Big Bill” had spent time at Home.

Just as the “Prudes” were being kicked out of Home in late-1913, the son of Gertie Vose went on a trip across the sea to Seattle and knocked on the door of the Burns Detective Agency. He told the agents that he could find the anarchist David Caplan and his accomplice Matthew Schmidt, still wanted for the Los Angeles Times bombing, and he instantly became one of their paid in-

formants. This accursed son of a militant anarchist was Donald Vose and he traveled north to the town of Rolling Bay on Bainbridge Island. Using information gleaned from the commune, Donald found Caplan working as a barber and warned him that private detectives had seen him entering Home to see his wife Flora.

After closing the barber-shop, Caplan took Donald deep into the woods where he lived on a chicken-farm and they talked at his home late into the evening. Donald came back several times during the winter and spring of 1914 and agreed to deliver a letter to Matthew Schmidt, known in the movement as Schmidty. In September, Donald traveled to New York City and presented a letter to Alexander Berkman written by his mother. With these radical family connections, Donald was given access to the local movement, a privilege he soon exploited. Berkman arranged a meeting with Schmidty where Donald was able to deliver Caplan's letter and then sneak off to inform the Burns Detective Agency. For the next months, Donald bummed around New York City with his informant's pay and gathered intelligence for the Agency. At the beginning of February 1915, Donald finally left New York City, most of the movement now suspicious of his presence. On February 13, the police arrested Schmidty using information from Donald Vose. Five days later, Caplan was arrested at his farm on Bainbridge Island.

Emma Goldman eventually put the pieces together, but not before Donald traveled to San Francisco and stayed in the home of local anarchists. Eric Morton eventually discovered his suitcase filled with guns, lists of names and addresses, and coded documents sent from the Burns Detective Agency. The San Francisco comrades suggested kidnapping Donald and holding him for ransom, but when Schmidty learned of this in his jail cell he refused to allow it. After learning the truth, Alexander Berkman had to be restrained from killing the traitor. Emma Goldman informed the entire movement of Donald's treachery in the columns of her *Mother Earth* newspaper and ended the article with the following curse: "You are a liar, traitor, spy. You have lied away the liberty and life of our comrades. Yet not they but you will suffer the penalty. You will roam the earth accursed, shunned and hated; a burden unto yourself."

After their Los Angeles trial in December 1915, Schmidty was sentenced to life in prison while Caplan was given ten years. A few months later, the police raided the Magon brother's Edendale commune in Los Angeles and arrested them for sending "indecent materials" through the mail, namely their paper *Regeneracion*, printed in a barn on the commune. The brothers had lead the anarchist PLM into the Mexican Revolution only to be jailed in 1912 for conspiracy to foment the 1911 uprising along the US and Mexico border. Ricardo Flores Magon, Enrique Flores Magon, Librado Rivera and Anselmo L. Figueroa were all imprisoned at the McNeil Island Federal Penitentiary, just a short boat ride from the Home commune. During their imprisonment, residents of the commune visited these PLM militants and transmitted information for them back to California and Mexico. As you can see, the threads of this anarchist conspiracy were woven pretty tightly along the Pacific coast, and they all came under attack as the US government prepared to enter WWI.

Before the Magon brothers were arrested, the Supreme Court ruled on Jay Fox's appeal in February 1915, finding him guilty for inciting indecent exposure with his article "The Nudes and the Prudes." Fox had returned from Chicago in 1913 and settled in Seattle where he organized with timber workers. In late-1915, he eventually returned to Home to await the Supreme Court ruling and his eventual jail sentence. In July, the sheriff arrived to take Fox off to a Tacoma jail cell and as they departed a large crowd made sure the sheriff knew no one had stopped swimming

naked. Fox served just short of two months before his release on September 11, an event marked by a celebration at Home. Donald Vose would receive no such treatment when he returned.

For some reason, this cursed son of Gertie Vose rode the ferry from Tacoma to Home on January 26, 1916, only to be met by a mob of enraged residents who unleashed a “murderous attack.” He jumped on the ferry to Seattle but eventually came back after a failed marriage in Los Angeles. His mother let him in when he knocked on the door late at night, but she never recovered from the pain caused by his betrayal. After his face was spit on, Donald Vose left Home for good and signed up as a sailor for the Merchant Marine, his life becoming one long blur of alcoholism. One day in 1945, an aging Donald was carrying a case of beer onto a cargo ship when he fell off the gangplank and died on impact. The curse of Emma Goldman had finally come true. Donald was a burden even to himself, only Home never recovered from what he did. After years of repression, the commune began its final implosion. Over half of the commune sided against the remaining militants and filed a lawsuit for the Mutual Home Association to be dissolved with the land divided into individual plots. When the militants lost this battle, unknown persons torched the communal Liberty Hall in 1919. Rather than let it become private property, they preferred it be nothing but ashes.

One anarchist from Home who never gave up the struggle was Enrico Travaglio. He first arrived with his second wife Juliette Verrell sometime after 1908. He officially lived in Tacoma but spent most of his time either in an IWW print shop or at Home with his comrades. According to his third wife Esther, Enrico always “loved Home and visited the place often.” It was here that he became fluent in Esperanto and it was in Home that his eldest daughter Leah met her future husband, a young man named Radium LaVen who she grew up with. Leah’s mother Frankie eventually moved to Home so she could be near her daughter and former lover Enrico. Frankie and Enrico had two other daughters who also lived at Home, although little is known about them.

In 1913, Enrico began to publish a newspaper out of Tacoma called *Why?* that advocated for “a society wherein authority under its three aspects—political, social, and religious—will be eliminated; where free agreement and solidarity will substitute judicial power; where labor shall be organized of its own accord, without external power.” Despite Enrico’s best effort, this paper only lasted until July 1914, the month WWI broke out. Around that time, an anarchist from San Francisco named Isabelle Ferrari came to visit Enrico at the Home commune. During those days together, Isabelle became pregnant with their daughter Fulvia before returning to California to give birth on her aunt’s commune in Mendocino. After that, she disappeared in the Ukraine and her daughter Fulvia grew up with her identity kept a secret. Enrico would only learn about her existence decades later.

While his other daughters grew up at Home, this “ladies’ man” who “could charm the skirts off any woman” eventually left his second wife Juliette and moved north to Seattle. It’s highly likely that he was involved in the Seattle General Strike of 1919, although much like his daughters, Enrico was good at leaving no traces. He started a newspaper in Seattle called *The Dawn* and was working at a print shop called the Olympic Press when he met his third wife Esther in 1924. The couple moved south to California soon afterward and Enrico spent the rest of his life in San Francisco, the city where his anarchist struggles began. In 1966, when he was 90 years old, Enrico wrote a short text on of Home titled “The Trials of a Noble Experiment”. In all those years since the 1910s, he never forgot the joy he’d found there with his lovers, his daughters, and his comrades, a place where his body had filled with the “surging spirit of dare and do.” Just before she passed away in 1909, the spiritualist anarchist Lois Waisebrooker had written from Denver,

“what I want most is the power TO DO, TO DO.” It would seem this is what united the anarchists of Home across time and space.

Personal Afterword From Contributing Author

Now that we’re done telling you the history of spiritualism and a tiny commune on the Salish Sea, I can tell you what Home is like today. The first time I went there was to check out a cheap piece of land in 2016. When I got out of the car, all I could hear was a little wind, a few birds, and that’s all. It was one of the most peaceful, calming places I’ve ever been to. Unfortunately someone else had the same idea and when I went back the land was purchased with a sign nailed on a tree that read: WARNING: GUN TOTING LIBERTARIANS. That’s kind of the vibe for the whole region, but Home does have two food banks and I even found a squat tucked in the woods. The schoolhouse built by anarchists is still there, owned by a hippie family, and they told me the children’s vandalism is still carved into the wooden support beams. I walked through apple orchards planted by anarchists, still growing in their original lines, and I visited the Key Peninsula Historical Society center where the press that printed *Discontent* is now a small tourist attraction. Visitors can place a blank piece of paper on the iron machine, ink the plates, and print a copy of an anarchist newspaper which they can take home to show their friends. There was an old man working at the Historical Society when I got there with an old-school workers cap on his head and a belt-buckle made with a sea-shell holding up his pants. When I told him I was trying to write the history of West Coast anarchism, he told me to simply “hurry up.”

I found a document at the Historical Society while flipping through their massive binders, a letter written by a young black man describing his experiences at Home. Sometime before 1910, this man stepped off the ferry and found himself surrounded by dozens of spiritualists and anarchists. At first he felt uncomfortable, but then he explained why: for the first time in his life, white people were treating him like a human. I wish I could say this is vibe for the entire region, but that would be a lie. Like most of rural Western Washington, the Key Peninsula was known for its Nazis, its meth, and its sketchy shit in the woods, only that’s starting to change, thankfully. The first time I ever heard a white person use the N word was in Western Washington, just like it’s the first place where I ever saw Nazi propaganda pasted on light-poles. This was back in 2003, and since then there’s been quite an anarchist resurgence, mostly fueled by residents of Olympia, Washington.

There are a ton of spiritualists in Olympia, almost outnumbered by anarchists. There’s even some Theosophists who still read Blavatsky. There’s also a lot of Steiner-ists who send their kids to Waldorf schools and do bio-dynamic farming and shop at the Olympia Food Co-Op. Sadly, there’s still fascists and crypto-fascists, some more well-known than others. There’s a satanic dentist landlord, a history of satanists in the Thurston County Sheriff’s Department, and a bunch of actual witches scattered in the trees. Most notably, there’s a trance medium named JZ Knight who lives with her followers in a gated compound the next town over. JZ Knight channels an ancient Lemurian warrior named Ramtha and makes a lot of money in process. I thought she was pretty benign at first. I was even happy when she bought up the water rights of the land around her compound so no one could build there. You can imagine my disgust when she and Ramtha decided to support Trump and fund his border wall. I guess the lesson is you can’t trust these people.

In a 2010 documentary about Olympia, a woman explains that just like the Ramtha compound, the city of Olympia is “also filled with enlightened people.” It’s true that there’s a lot of weird, magical shit that happens in Olympia and the surrounding region. You can find anarchist witches, anarchist occultists, and even anarchists spiritualists, whether they admit it or not. For whatever reason, Olympia has been a center of modern revolt since at least the 1980s when the international punk-wave brought anarchism back to its forgotten centers. If you look at everything that’s happened in Olympia from 1999 to 2019, it should be clear that it’s no ordinary place. When I compare my experiences of the city to those of the historical Home anarchists, I see a similar pattern. In Olympia, everyone seems to practice the basics of individualist anarchism, even if they aren’t anarchists. At the same time, everyone in Olympia is keenly aware that only the collective ever gets anything done. Because there are so many belief systems in Olympia, everyone quickly becomes used to navigating difference, just as they occasionally learn from each other. It’s taken many years to purge out the crypto-fascism, the suicidal pacifism, and the white supremacy from Olympia’s spiritualist matrix, but it’s working. Rather than anarchists being seen as “demons that carry negative energy” or some bullshit like that, they’re increasingly seen as normal, positive people who bring “joyous destruction” to the temples of the state and capitalism.

I hope this article answered some questions you might have had. There’s no way to tell this story simply, and to say we’ve barely scratched the surface would be an understatement. We’ve shown you just one drop of water from a massive sea and I can promise that thoroughly researching all the threads in this piece would take you months. After WWII, spiritualism and occultism were softly suppressed in favor of cybernetics, a far more effective form of population control. In this new capitalist empire, the population would be directly controlled by the free market, studied with computers, and endlessly barraged with hypnotic images, all modulated to produce maximum profits. Spiritualism and occultism became commodities, just as the hippie counter-culture aesthetic was used to sell cars, real estate, and clothing. Of all the ideas that animated Home, anarchism has remained the hardest for capitalism to recuperate, but this definitely isn’t the case for eugenics. The genetic ancestry service 23 and Me is one example of how capitalism and eugenics still enjoy a comfortable relationship. Today, AirBNB is partnered with 23 and Me to suggest short-term rental units based on a user’s ancestry. If someone’s DNA comes mostly from Sweden, they should definitely rent an AirBNB unit in Stockholm. It’s not as evil as forced sterilizations, but it’s still horribly stupid. For better and worse, eugenics is mainstream, just like in 1901. If you disagree, I can only point you towards the nearest Planned Parenthood. While it might be closer to the eugenics practiced by Emma Goldman, it’s definitely still eugenics.

By the way, it wasn’t just the Nazis who were into the occult and spiritualism. During WWII, the US employed two men to make the atomic bomb, both of them interested in occult subjects. Ernest O. Lawrence, a UC Berkeley professor, created the machines used to enrich uranium on an industrial scale, all the while believing he was the king alchemist. After building his first cyclotron, he claimed it was both a “new source of power and the philosopher’s stone—a means of transforming base metal into gold.” His eccentric partner, Robert Oppenheimer, famously uttered this phrase from the *Bhagavad-Gita* during their Trinity nuclear test: “I am become death, the destroyer of worlds.” After WWII, the US imported a bunch of Nazi scientists to help them defeat the USSR, and these scientists clearly fit right in with their US counterparts. Thomas Pynchon reminded the world of this reality in 1973 when he opened his novel *Gravity’s Rainbow* with the following quote: “Nature does not know extinction; all it knows is transformation. Everything science has taught me, and continues to teach me, strengthens my belief in the continuity of our

spiritual existence after death.” The man who wrote this was Wernher von Braun, a former SS officer and spiritualist mystic who used slave labor to build his V-2 rockets. He was recruited onto the teams at NASA and rehabilitated as a wholesome US hero who helped put a man on the moon. This is the kind of bullshit we were born into. It’s been quite a nightmare, to say the least.

The only difference between the modern Olympia anarchists and the historic Home anarchists is that most of our names are anonymous and the history books haven’t been written yet. Both groups have changed the history of the US, just as both groups have been centered in a specific geography. The spirit of revolt spans the entire globe and finds its strength in those open mediums who know how to channel its power. There is nothing occult about this process, it’s simply a fact, and those who know how to navigate the fogs of spiritualism will be that much more prepared when the next modern Blavatsky or Hitler arrives to manipulate and control the trusting. Unlike the thousands of named souls and spirits that are said to inhabit mediums, the spirit of revolt could be called an elemental force that cannot be controlled. Annie Besant called these things thought-forms. Others called them egregores. In any case, the spirit of revolt can only be summoned by a collective of individuals who share the same desire for freedom. The more people who participate, the greater the effect. As you can see, whether its Olympia or Home, the proof is in the pudding.

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