

American Utopianism

美式乌托邦

Short-lived, much loved

短命的狂热

How American idealists withdrew from the mainstream to create their own paradise

美国理想主义者退避俗世，自建天堂。

UTOPIANISM in politics gets a bad press. The case against the grand scale, stated in a well known and overwhelming. Utopia, the perfect society, is unattainable, for there is no such thing. Remaking society in pursuit of an illusion not only fails, it leads swiftly to mass murder and moral ruin. So recent history grimly attests.

乌托邦主义在政治上不是个好词，现在的主流观点是反对大规模、政府主导的事物。乌托邦这个完美的社会，则是可望不可及的海市蜃楼。强行让社会追求一个虚无缥缈的幻觉不只会以失败告终，也会很快走向大规模屠杀和道德崩溃，这已经被近代历史证实了。

Although true, that is just half the story. Not all modern Utopians aim to seize the state in order to cudgel the rest of the world back to paradise. Plenty of gentler ones want no more than to withdraw from the mainstream and create their own micro-paradise with a few like-minded idealists. Small experiments in collective living swept America, for example, early in the 19th century and again late in the 20th.

尽管这是事实，但并不全面。并不是所有的现代乌托邦都致力于夺取政权，并用暴力把世界改造成伊甸园。很多温和派乌托邦主义者充其量只希望退隐俗世，和一群志同道合者建造一个属于自己的微型天堂。从 19 世纪初到 20 世纪末，美国各地都有这些群居者的身影。

Most failed or fell short. None lasted. All were laughed at. Yet in this intelligent, sympathetic history, Chris Jennings makes a good case for remembering them well. Politics stultifies, he thinks, when people stop dreaming up alternative ways of life and putting them to small-scale test.

这种实践大都是失败的或者受人嘲笑。Chris Jennings 在他的书《现世天堂：美国乌托邦发展史》（《Paradise Now: The Story of American Utopianism.》）中记录了这段凝聚着前人智慧的而又令人同情的历史。他认为，如果人们停止对于另一种生活方式的梦想并不再付诸于实践，则是政治的停滞。

Though with occasional glances forward, Mr Jennings focuses largely on the 19th century. At least 100 experimental communes sprang up across the young American republic in the mid-1800s. Mr Jennings writes about five exemplary communities: the devout Shakers, Robert Owen's New Harmony, the Fourierist collective at Brook Farm, Massachusetts, the Icarians at Nauvoo, Illinois, inspired by a French proto-communist, Etienne Cabet, and the Oneida Community in New York state practising "Bible communism" and "complex marriage".

尽管书中偶尔会展望未来，Jennings 把大部分笔墨放在了 19 世纪。19 世纪中期，至少有 100 个实验性的公社在年轻的美利坚合众国中，如雨后春笋般萌芽般诞生。Jennings 描述了其中 5 个典型的社区：虔诚的震教徒（一个基督教的分支教派——译者注），罗伯特·欧文的新和谐村，傅里叶空想社会主义者在布鲁克农场和马萨诸塞州的公社，继承了法国共产主义者 Etienne Cabet 的伊卡洛斯派在纳府和伊利诺伊的公社，以及纽约的奥奈达社区（实践了“圣经共产主义”和“群婚”模式）。

The Shakers' founder was a Manchester Quaker, Ann Lee, a devout mother worn out by bearing

dead or dying children. In 1774 she left for the New World, determined to forswear sex and create a following to share her belief. An optimistic faith in human betterment, hard work and a reputation for honest trading helped the Shakers thrive. At their peak in the early 19th century, they had perhaps 5,000 members scattered in some 20 villages across eight states. They counselled celibacy, to spare women the dangers of child-bearing, made spare, slim furniture, now treasured in museums, and practised a wild, shaking dance that was taken as a sign of benign possession by the Holy Spirit.

震教徒派创始人是一位名叫 Ann Lee 的曼彻斯特贵格会教徒，她虔诚却饱受丧子之痛。1774 年，她决定开创一个新世界，她誓言禁欲并找到了志同道合的信徒。对于人类进步的乐观信心、努力工作、以及诚实交易使得震教徒派得以发展壮大。到了 19 世纪早期，教派发展到了鼎盛时期，在美国 8 个州的 20 个村子里散布着约 5000 名信徒。他们提倡独身禁欲，向妇女劝导生孩子的危险，制作现已被收藏于博物馆的细长家具，并跳一种狂野而颤抖的舞蹈，这被看作是圣灵良性附身的征兆。