

Paul A. Olson. *The Kingdom of Science: Literary Utopianism and British Education, 1612-1870*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002. xii + 375 pp. \$65.00. Review by MICHAEL LESLIE, RHODES COLLEGE.

The main point of Paul Olson's book is a stark indictment of Western science and education, ascribing to the particular forms and trajectories of these the causes of a multitude of modern ills. These ills range from the distortions of the individual caused by a competitive and coercive educational ethos, through the dissociation of sensibility caused by over-emphasis in schooling on empirical, quantitative reasoning, to looming global catastrophe as our species, inspired by core Western attitudes to nature and science, exploits its environment ruthlessly, recklessly, and relentlessly.

This book seeks to locate the origins of this destructive Western scientific and educational mentality in a rather broadly defined "literary utopianism," particularly that created in England from the sixteenth century onwards. Professor Olson begins with More's *Utopia* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, also glancing at Montaigne's essay "Of Cannibals," seeing both main texts as representing something of a lost age of innocence, a time when man could envisage the amelioration of society without radical intervention in the natural world. He then moves to the foundation, as he sees it, of the modern scientific worldview in the work of Francis Bacon. Bacon's attitude to the natural world is essentially imperialist, "the gradual realization of a human empire over a nonhuman nature" (41). Bacon's scientific method is seen as a decisive turn away from earlier natural science that dwelt on the perception of divine harmonies; for all the millenarian tendencies Professor Olson detects, Bacon emphasizes "the privileging of the isolation and manipulation of the particular variable" (55), an atomization that opens the door to all manner of evils. Bacon's heirs among the scientific groups of mid-seventeenth-century England and Europe are seen as effecting the essential translation of the generalities and parables of *The New Atlantis* into forms that could be the basis for real-world political and social programmes, particularly in the field of education, "creating the institutions of collaborative, normal scientific research *and of education* at the elementary and secondary level that would support ... research centers" (86; italics added). Professor Olson is cautious

about the origins of the Royal Society in the correspondence circle of Samuel Hartlib, but he sees in the intersection of religious, political, scientific, and educational developments of the 1650s and early 1660s the conditions for the growth of the dissenting academies, for him an essential conduit for the communication of this Baconian aspiration, “the creation of a better life through technological innovation” (88).

Chapter Four turns with some relief and admiration to the conservative critics of “the extension of human empire through research and education,” a collection of British Worthies that includes Swift, Pope, Gay, John Arbuthnot, and Thomas Parnell, all of whom look back beyond what, for Professor Olson, are the disastrous misdirections of the seventeenth century to the world of classical epic, particularly Homer, and epic’s asserted moral of the limits of the possible, the need to acknowledge those limits, and the right uses of reason. Swift’s *Gulliver* is seen as the ultimate product of Baconian dissociation, his revulsion on his return at the end of the voyage to the land of the Houyhnhnms contrasted with the humane response of Odysseus’ embrace of Penelope. But these conservative writers represent a road not taken by England and the West. In the next three chapters Professor Olson shows how the dull and dismal world decried in *The Dunciad* triumphs in the work of Adam Smith and the Utilitarians of the nineteenth century, despite the pungent criticisms of the Romantics and, the subject of the final chapter, Charles Dickens in *Hard Times*. Dickens’s representation of the “massive violation of nature that is Gradgrind’s school and Bounderby’s Coketown” provides the coda: “The massacre of the innocents in the school is mirrored itself in the murder of the green world of innocence inside the children and in the environment of Coketown” (248). Baconian science’s eldest child, exploitative capitalism, combines with coercive, repressive education to pervert humanity and despoil the planet.

As we see ever more the alarming evidence of climate change and environmental destruction, and lament the state of western society, it would take a brave reader to discount Professor Olson’s conclusions out-of-hand. So why is this reader so unsatisfied by the book? Partly, no doubt, it is the unrelievedness of the jeremiad: the book makes grim reading. Professor Olson attacks his targets—and they are legion—on every page, and one ends up with a sense that nothing in the present world can escape his outrage and disapprobation. In part, too, this is because he turns his gaze on his own

experience as a school student, with a sense of deep woundedness. My summary of the argument cannot communicate the fact that this book, which ranges widely in time and topic, is also, paradoxically, profoundly personal, shot through with Professor Olson's implied reflection on his own life as a scholar, educator, citizen, father, and husband, and his frustration with humanity's continuing follies in a world that has disappointed him.

But there are other reasons why the book seems unsatisfactory. Professor Olson can paint with a very broad brush indeed, and the result often reads more as polemic than as a contribution to scholarship, despite the plentiful notes and supporting quotations. From the first pages this reader wanted to see Professor Olson consider alternative viewpoints, in order to achieve a recognition of the greater complexity that is at the heart of so many of his chosen texts. When Professor Olson asserts that "More's Utopian subjects need only to obey the natural law and reason that their nature has given them to create their benign social world" (19), one immediately objects: from the founder Utopos to the structure of penalties and control Raphael describes, no-one seems to think that benign social order comes naturally. When he claims that "*The Tempest* [depicts a] static-state utopia," one wonders which play Professor Olson has been reading—everything changes in the course of that play. Reading Bacon and his heirs from our historically-distant vantage-point ("the power of nineteenth- and twentieth-century science and its capacity for domination are witnessed here" [50]) can be interesting, but the student of seventeenth-century culture constantly chafes at the misalignment of modern and contemporary boundaries of meaning, gaps through which meaning often seems to drain away. What did Bacon mean by "science"? What did Bacon mean by "industry"? Professor Olson reproves Bacon for "the absence of a cost-benefit agenda or analysis ... in the treatment of gunpowder" (51). But where does Bacon give an in-depth treatment of gunpowder, lacking the cost-benefit analysis? If Bacon really had betrayed a giddy, morally-irresponsible delight in the ancestor of our weapons of mass destruction, the argument would be powerful. But this reader cannot locate it.

Other scholars have addressed some of the same issues and acknowledged complexities that Professor Olson does not. Consider one of the conclusions of Richard H. Grove's *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens, and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (1995): "It may seem prudent to question some of the simplistic assumptions that have been

made about the degree to which science itself has genuinely been subordinated to the interests of capital and the colonial state” (485-6). Unfortunately, the subtle and cautious questioning of that sentence is not matched in *The Kingdom of Science*. Professor Olson explains that the first idea for this book was as a collection of essays, and perhaps that is the best way of reading it: more a series of extensive, historically and culturally-informed, polemical opened pieces than a contribution to the academic understanding of utopias and science in the origin of the modern world.

Raymond Hylton. *Ireland's Huguenots and Their Refuge, 1662-1745, An Unlikely Haven*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2005. xiii + 226 pp. + 24 illus. \$69.50. Review by HEIDI MURPHY.

Of the 200,000 Huguenots forced to flee France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries some 10,000 settled in Ireland. The story of how and why these fervent Protestants chose to dwell in this most Catholic of islands is at the heart of Raymond Hylton's *Ireland's Huguenots and Their Refuge, 1662-1745, An Unlikely Haven*.

While the persecutions Huguenots endured in their native France are well documented, the reasons so many sought asylum in Ireland and the fate of those who subsequently settled there has been woefully neglected. In Ireland Huguenot ancestry is prized and respected even to this day, but sadly misconceptions and embellishments, which for centuries remained unchallenged, have taken the place of historical accuracy, with the result that the true story of Ireland's Huguenots has remained untold.

In an attempt to dispel the myths and correct the wealth of misinformation that surrounds this subject, Raymond Hylton has trawled through the archives and produced an account of Ireland's Huguenots that is both exhaustive and enlightening. The background to their enforced flight from France, their initial reception in what would become their adopted country, the unique contribution they would make to Irish society, and their gradual assimilation into the Irish population are all recounted in great detail. The exploits of some of the more colourful and high profile Huguenot characters are explored.

Taking as his starting point the complexities, which by 1662 made Catho-