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Joanna Picciotto. *Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010. ix + 863 pp. $49.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-674-04906-2.

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Five years after her prize-winning essay in *English Literary History*, "Reforming the Garden: The Experimentalist Eden and *Paradise Lost*," Joanna Picciotto has delivered on its promise: a monograph colossal both in its scope and size (863 pages). In *Labors of Innocence*, Picciotto writes thematically about the fertile conjunction between literature and science as it developed in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England, offering new discussions on the ideas and texts of authors such as Francis Bacon, Gerrard Winstanley, John Evelyn, Robert Boyle, Robert Hooke, Thomas Sprat, Andrew Marvell, William Davenant, John Locke, Daniel Defoe, Joseph Addison, Celia Fiennes, and above all John Milton. The category of labor, she suggests, provides us with a new avenue through which to recapture early modern ways of thinking which have been discarded and lost. In order to identify this inconspicuous category of labor, Picciotto carefully distinguishes the early modern language of *imitatio Adami* from the more dominant discourse of Christ. The latter, according to Picciotto, orients the public to the symbolism of Eucharistic consumption (which thereby cultivates the postlapsarian need for redemption), rather than the Adamic ethos of production (p. 8, pp. 45-47). Adam is presented by Picciotto as being of central importance to this alternative genealogy of the modern bourgeois public sphere: Adam was, for many early modern thinkers, ***the*** sovereign worker--a person who named and commanded all other creatures in paradise. Such a figure, Picciotto contends, signified for the intellectuals of post-Reformation England the symbiosis of human effort and creational innocence, or a dialectical settlement between the punitive sweat of the brow and paradisal bliss.

Picciotto begins her discussion by locating this Adamic personality within the broadly defined framework of the Baconian program, as famously outlined in a proem to ***The Great Instauration*** (1620): "whether that commerce between the mind of man and the nature of things … might by any means be restored to its perfect and original condition, or if that may not be, yet reduced to

a better condition than that in which it now is." This original, undamaged nature of Adam distinguishes itself from, for example, "a Hobbesian state of nature" (p. 304); it is "a visible and palpable nature ontologically prior to--and radically different from--humanity's 'fallen' experience of it" (p. 1). Drawing upon Bacon's key dichotomy between scientific (thus "innocent") fact and culpable value judgement, Picciotto suggests that "the public sphere was not initially imagined as a space for debate in which rights-bearing individuals argued on behalf of their interests" but as "that of a corporate body engaged in the labor of truth production; even explicitly polemical claims were presented as the *disinterested* products of this work" (p. 5, emphasis added). Here Picciotto is advancing a very complex thesis concerning our historical understanding of modern science, which needs to be unpacked.

To fill the conceptual gaps within the traditional association between the rise of the Protestant work ethic and early experimental science, that is, between the laborer and the thinker, Picciotto considers this "Adamic epistemology" to be "the common ground between Puritan 'experimental faith' and the Baconian faith in experiment" (p. 4). Adam's *corpus mysticum* represented the new public sphere of natural objects, subsequently secularized in the spheres of print and the magnifying lens. These represented natural objects are in fact the reified labor of Baconian authors who seek to regain paradise through experiment, because human senses are already corrupt and in need of both technological and institutional improvements. "As an intellectual model," Picciotto proceeds, "the innocent Adam embodied a new ideal of estranged and productive observation" (p. 2). The Baconian formation of scientific knowledge thus turns to the Adamic ethos of production whose innocence is manifest in its impersonal, objective, open-ended, and public character. While Hannah Arendt, in *The Human Condition* (1954), criticized the modern glorification of labor as the perilous admission of the private into the public realm, Picciotto turns such an argument on its head, as it were, finding the roots of the Baconian synthesis of the thinker and the laborer in the corporate body of the first sovereign delver in which the English public was remade and "social difference disappeared" (p. 3, cf. p. 27).

Chapter 1 concerns a set of problems arising with the typological representation of the state of innocence. As the Christian doctrine of the *felix culpa* presupposes the corruption of human nature, any serious attempt to "imagine" the human condition in Eden "endangers the very distinction between created and corrupted humanity" (p. 31). Hence Picciotto characterizes the relation between Adam and Christ as "zero sum" in the way that Christ reduces Adam to a means of producing sin and the need for redemption, as Thomas Sprat writes: "This had bin the only *Religion*, if men had continued innocent in *Paradise*, and had not wanted a *Redemption*" (pp. 32, 36). One of the highlights in this chapter is a discussion of purgatory. Drawing upon insights found in Stephen Greenblatt's *Hamlet in Purgatory* (2001) regarding a fifteenth-century manuscript illumination that depicts an Adamic peasant with a hoe who is either "working the field or digging a grave,"[1] Picciotto seeks to establish a link "between purgation and labor, between the trial by fire and the trial of work" (p. 107). Unlike Dante's epic, Milton's removal of purgatory from *Paradise Lost* does not indicate its disappearance but rather "an expansion of its functions" (p. 108). Understood as the reorganization of human activity in Adam, labor itself became a Protestant paradise of purgatorial pains.

The second, third, and fourth chapters trace the developments of the scientific community from the Civil War and Interregnum to the Restoration. Picciotto suggests that what would become the Royal Society did not emerge as the result of a commanding call from the restored monarch, but had a more diffuse and complex provenance, one which involved a number of dif-

ferent coteries: Samuel Hartlib's epistolary "circle," through James Harrington's Rota Club discussion group, the Gresham College group, and the Oxford Experimental Philosophical Club. Indeed, many members of the Hartlib circle "seemed happy to work with almost any form of government" (p. 119). Chapter 2 discusses further the experimentalist "blending of pastoral and georgic elements," whose postlapsarian divide Bacon finds in the filial rivalry of Cain the farmer and Abel the shepherd (pp. 130-131). Chapter 3 complicates debates on the Baconian hostility to female nature and the carnal knowledge Eve represents, by examining the various gendered metaphors (e.g., of courtship, marriage, and rape) that the experimentalists employed to depict their relationship with the object of their investigation: nature. Chapter 4 investigates the Restoration culture of innocent curiosity within the "constitutive conflicts of intellectual identity [which ...] played out in competing models of public space" from the traditional court, the church, the theatre, and the alehouse to the laboratory, the curiosity cabinet, and the coffeehouse (p. 258). Together with Jürgen Habermas and Steven Pincus, Picciotto observes that the growing number of coffeehouses provided the public a polite space "in which disagreement did not lead ineluctably to violence" (p. 305).

The second part of the book turns to close readings of key texts. Considering the major impact of Hooke's *Micrographia* (1665) all across English society, chapter 5 offers an excellent reading of Andrew Marvell's *The Last Instructions to a Painter* (1667), by showing how Marvell's satirical scheme exploits the experimentalist "model of virtual witnessing"--or the technological resonance between print and lens--to discount state propaganda (p. 327); Marvellian dissent is no longer partisan but "rational," laying bare through literary lens "the causes of both the Dutch naval victory at Medway and the crisis of political representation in Charles II's England" (p. 344). Chapter 6 on Milton, which may be thought of as the culmination of Picciotto's thesis, also demonstrates its limits. Despite the many qualities Milton does not share with the experimental authors she studies (for example, Milton *did* care about the forms of government under which he labored; thus, unlike the Baconian image of Eve, Milton depicts her in an aesthetically rich and comparatively egalitarian state), Picciotto continues to discuss Milton's works within the Baconian framework. Milton's whole career, according to Picciotto, "was a sustained effort to make literary experience an instrument of Baconian 'advancement'" (p. 406); Milton's educational program was organized by "the Baconian vision of paradisal restoration" (p. 409); the most familiar passages of *Il Penseroso* "takes on an unexpectedly Baconian dimension" (p. 411). These characterizations can be problematic, especially when--despite her clear sympathy--Picciotto does not provide any in-depth analysis of Bacon's major works so that her readers would be able to understand more accurately what she means by a "Baconian" reading of Milton; scholars still disagree on the social, political, and ecological implications of the Baconian agenda. Some historians might prefer a more nuanced account of early modern science, emphasizing how from its inception the language of experiment, along with its partner word "experience," had an ambiguous character.

Taken as a whole, and despite her truly innovative concerns with labor and the Adamic personality, the line of Picciotto's arguments appears to be strangely rectilinear and teleological, amounting to the repetition of a Weber-like secularization thesis. As recent historians of science have increasingly focused on the religious *dimensions* (not only origins) of modern science, we may well take more seriously Bacon's apocalyptic vision of restoring humanity to a creational state in his own religious terms: "may [God] graciously grant to us to write an apocalypse or true vision of the footsteps of the Creator imprinted on his creatures."[2] Furthermore, while ecofeminists may claim that the gendered language of Baconi-

an science and its contribution to the rise of technology and instrumental rationality should elicit criticism rather than defense, Hannah Arendt would argue that the modern organological conception of the public realm did much more harm than good, anticipating a mechanistic model of bureaucracy susceptible to totalitarianism. With regard to Milton's idea of labor, there are many fine studies that Picciotto does not engage with or acknowledge. The final chapter of the book, on Addison's formation of "Mr. Spectator," lays bare Picciotto's teleological approach, for she no longer discusses the "innocence labourer," which her book is ostensibly about, but the "innocent observer." It is clear that for Picciotto this transition from hand to eye is not only a displacement but a dialectical progression from labor to observation, one in which knowledge is sublime production. The subversive richness of Picciotto's (and early modern) metaphorical thinking in the first half of the book disappears, as she declares "paradisal recovery [in labor] beside the point" (p. 591). It seems to me that this conclusion is rather self-defeating and Picciotto's accounts of historical transition remain largely descriptive with an insufficient analysis of its causal mechanisms. As an interesting counterpoint to Picciotto's understanding of the late seventeenth-century public, recent studies on the early reception of Milton's poetics by Nicholas von Maltzahn show how an Addisonian "polite" audience misread ***Paradise Lost*** by sublimating its political and religious dimensions. The criticisms above, however, must be read as my response to the ***merit*** of this genuinely innovative book, a work that has the power to provoke fresh thoughts and initiate new debates.

Notes

[1]. Greenblatt, ***Hamlet in Purgatory*** (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 51.

[2]. Quoted in George Ovitt, Jr., The ***Restoration of Perfection: Labor and Technology in Medieval Culture*** (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 22.

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