

history is to re-write it' [*The Critic as an Artist*, 1891]), or even the apocryphal answer of the Chinese leader Zhou Enlai (when asked in 1971 what he thought of the French Revolution of 1789, he answered, 'It is too soon to say'). It is not the past that makes sense of the present, but rather the other way around. Indeed, if we read this book through the perspective of the current stage of the field, we are likely to discover that many vectors that are now shaping its agenda and representations already existed as fresh buds in the 1880s.

The Origins of Organ Transplantation addresses those who have interest in the history of ideas in general and of medical ideas in particular. Of course, it also concerns those who are interested in the history of surgery and transplantation. It is well written, amply illustrated and interesting. Above all, it makes a timely contribution to the historiography of organ transplantation, a contribution that is unfortunately somewhat belittled by the author's failure to notice and refer to Nicholas Tilney's not-so-recent book that deals with pretty much the same issues and makes very similar sociological observations – Nicholas L. Tilney, *Transplant: From Myth to Reality* (New Haven, MA: Yale University Press, 2003).

Miran Epstein,

Queen Mary, University of London

Daniel E. Bender, *American Abyss: Savagery and Civilization in the Age of Industry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), pp. x + 328, £26.95/\$39.95, hardback, ISBN: 978-0-8014-4598-9.

According to Raymond Williams, 'There are two main senses of *industry*: (i) the human quality of sustained application or effort; (ii) an institution or set of institutions for production or trade. The two senses are neatly divided by their modern adjectives *industrious* and *industrial*.' The perceived relation of these

two senses might be seen to frame Daniel Bender's wide-ranging study of American attitudes to progress in the years around 1900, for which industry is thus a keyword. In the thought of those examined, the degree of a society's industry was taken to be a measure of its civilisation. In the spirit of the late nineteenth century, industry came to be historicised; it was understood as a historical phenomenon with a story – of its past – to be told. The main contention of *American Abyss* is that these histories of industrial civilisation were written primarily in the language of biology and, in particular, of evolution. American practitioners of the new disciplines of sociology and economics employed biologicistic structures of thought to read early human history back through the lenses of industry and immigration.

In prehistory, migration had been an engine of natural selection that pitted races against each other as well as the environment, but modern travel had become too easy to play its natural selective function any longer, and so immigration was to be discouraged. The flourishing of non-whites in urban America portended 'race suicide', a risk adumbrated by an appeal to European theories of degeneration, according to which evolution could begin moving in reverse given the right (or wrong) circumstances. The blame for degeneration was widely placed at the door of women, the middle classes and others, but radical critics sought to question the eugenic consensus by celebrating the figure of the tramp and recasting the rich as truly degenerate.

Bender is extremely successful in his search for traces of degeneration theory across a vast range of settings in American life *circa* 1900: from discussions of urban regeneration, social reform, women's (and children's) work, to slum surveys, hygiene and segregation, as well as settlement movements and beautiful baby contests, and so this book represents a vast amount of primary research. The evidence amassed for a widespread belief in the existence of some connection between race, savagery and civilisation, both in domestic and

imperial settings is overwhelming, but of course this is nothing new. Such beliefs have been well charted, certainly, in European history for many years, but Bender seeks to extend such knowledge to its application by American thinkers and researchers. The role of contemporary European debates, however, is a difficult one to situate, pre-dating (as they did) their American cousins by several years. While Bender acknowledges that degeneration and other theories had their origins elsewhere, the intellectual pathways from the Old World to the New are not mapped in sufficient detail to allow a proper judgement over the status of American theorising: to what extent was it merely derivative, or can we talk about a unique body of thought? More critically, Bender seeks to introduce an emphasis on industry as the key term which is never quite established. Drawing on Carl Bücher's 1901 text, *Industrial Evolution*, Bender makes this phrase central to his claims about the way industry was understood to have progressed, as if it were evolving. However, outside of this German treatise in historical economics, the trope of 'industrial evolution' was seldom used by the American authors cited, except perhaps those discussed in the (excellent) chapter on gender. Moreover, it is unclear what sort of role evolution played in these understandings: was it a metaphor, or was it taken to be a real force of history? This confusion is exemplified in Bender's claim that 'Industrial evolution had raised certain races to civilization, but left others in poverty' (p. 39). But did this 'evolution' cause industrialism, or was it merely a framework for understanding change? The issue of causation is sedimented in the two senses of the word 'industry' outlined above: do industrious people cause industrialism, or does 'industrial evolution' create industrious individuals? This question is never quite addressed, and while it is clearly correct to highlight the importance of industry in evaluating civilisation, it was only one measure among the many described. Bender's relentless emphasis on the phrase 'industrial evolution' needlessly detracts from a study

whose virtue is, by contrast, its enormous range, especially since industry only appears as a central concern in a minority of the chapters.

In a spirited epilogue, Bender reveals his motivation, rooted in present political debates and, as such, this is engaged historical research. Along with its pricing, this should help the book appeal to a wide audience of scholars and students of social and medical thought; but, while elegantly produced by Cornell in general, the affordability of the volume comes at a cost, as it would have benefited from more generous image reproduction, not least the fascinating set of maps which displayed new taxonomies of the world's races. Bender is a smooth and skilful stylist, who teases out the complexity of views expressed in his material, but the delivery is at times rather compressed, and a more detailed display of primary sources would have strengthened the argument. This could, perhaps, have been provided in place of the often-repetitive restatement of the overall thesis; nonetheless, as the book progresses, it becomes clear that the issues at stake are big ones. For this ambition Bender is to be highly commended, and he is at his best when weaving together the tapestry of ways in which the problems of race, gender, class and migration have been understood by Americans in the languages of science, medicine and empire, in what is a rich and complex book.

Daniel C.S. Wilson,
University of Cambridge

James D. Schmidt, *Industrial Violence and the Legal Origins of Child Labor*, Cambridge Historical Studies in American Law and Society (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. xxiii + 279, £17.99/\$27.99, paperback, ISBN: 978-0-521-15505-2.

James D. Schmidt's *Industrial Violence and the Legal Origins of Child Labor* is an