

It is difficult to imagine a more important topic in late nineteenth-century British-American relations than the changed relative positions of the two nations. In effect, the student had overtaken and now led the teacher. Carnegie observed, "America also offers a helpful model for Britain's struggle with its own domestic conflict" (159). He also declared that American democracy represented a far better type of polity than the British aristocracy. He argued that the political equality of all Americans in contrast to the British class system was a prime factor in the former colony's vast economic achievement.

Eisenstadt reveals that Carnegie relied on and cited numerous statistics to support his position. He pointed to a population increase of more than 30 percent among native-born Americans. Annual expenditures on public education had risen dramatically, and, at the time Carnegie wrote, America's farms comprised 84,000 square miles, an area equal to one-fourth of Europe.

The reader will also learn of Britain's response to Carnegie. The British establishment defensively challenged his premises and what it considered downright effrontery. Britain, "the land of effetes and snobs" (115), struck back. The aristocracy did not merely claim privilege, but knew it had some obligation to the nation, whereas the American aristocracy of money felt none. In effect, America was far from being the perfect land that Carnegie described. There was trouble in this paradise: inequality of wealth distribution and a wasteful, luxurious lifestyle that surpassed that of the British ruling classes.

In a book full of positives, one minor negative stands out: there is a lot of repetition. However, Eisenstadt's critique of Carnegie stands on solid ground, is highly readable, and earns high marks from this reviewer.

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*Thomas Eakins: Art, Medicine, and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia.* By AMY WERBEL. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007. xii, 194 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$55.)

Amy Werbel's new book on Thomas Eakins (1844–1916) seeks to understand Philadelphia's foremost realist painter and the controversies surrounding him "with a medical gaze" (30)—a perspective ostensibly truer and more faithful to the artist than that found in much recent scholarly writing. The book makes some valuable contributions, notably in clarifying the nature of Eakins's photographs and his relation to medical anatomy, but it ultimately seems marred by a combative approach reflecting the current divisive state of scholarship on the artist. Werbel espouses a hard-line empiricist view that "historical facts" (x) understood "objectively" (41) trump what she calls "the cottage industry of speculative historians" today (4). "In recent years," says Werbel (without naming

names), “[Eakins] has been cast by scholars as a victim of a paranoid Oedipal complex, sexual harasser, pervert, philanderer, abusive uncle, misogynist, repressed homosexual, and slandered innocent” (x). Lamenting that “We live in a time of fallen heroes” (ix), Werbel contends that “our historical subjects deserve the same common courtesies we hope for the living—the privilege of self-definition to the extent feasible, an effort to understand context and point of view, a presumption of innocence, and finally, not to be neutered, outed, demonized, or similarly categorized to suit the intellectual fashions of our own times” (161).

As those quotations suggest, this is an unabashedly polemical and reactionary book. Even if Werbel’s complaints have validity in some cases, the problem with polemical reaction is that it fans the flames and invites close scrutiny upon itself. For the record, she does not align my own work on Eakins with the aforementioned “cottage industry,” but I find her dismissive tone troubling. Surprisingly—in light of her argumentativeness—Werbel, for the most part, avoids direct or detailed engagement with specific arguments by the particular historians she deems “speculative.” Instead, she tends to lump them together anonymously so that they appear a bit like the generic “freaks” held up for voyeuristic inspection and ridicule by certain nineteenth-century photographers whose images are illustrated in one chapter of her book (101–2).

Werbel’s general unwillingness to engage others’ arguments forthrightly or in detail seems evasive and self-defeating, for it suggests the powerlessness of “historical facts” and her own inability to counter scholarship she finds disagreeable. Ironically, several of the book’s passages make significant concessions to such scholarship by acknowledging, for example, that Eakins “badgered” women to pose nude (4) with a “wanton disregard” (76) of their complaints, that his “insistence on full display of the penis, dead or alive” can be viewed as having a “perverse or harassing” (75) intent, and that the medical school dissecting rooms and Pennsylvania Academy where Eakins worked both constituted “homosocial” (76) environments. When Werbel does pointedly challenge one scholar—Bridget Goodbody, author of a now somewhat dated 1994 article on Eakins—on a semantic issue concerning cancer and Eakins’s *The Agnew Clinic*, the objection appears petty and misdirected (45–47). Meanwhile, Werbel largely (or in some cases entirely) ignores the main arguments about Eakins in major recent publications by art historians such as Henry Adams, Michael Leja, Sarah Burns, and others, even when these bear directly on the questions of science and sexuality at the center of her book. Perhaps if Werbel had a more original argument of her own, and a less strident desire to counter “speculative” interpretations by other scholars, such problems would not be so visible.

To make matters worse, *Thomas Eakins* fails to pass muster with the author’s own stated methodological standards, for the book repeatedly deviates from “historical facts” by glossing over enormous contextual differences and by blurring past and present. This tendency appears most noticeably in chapter 1 and in the

conclusion, where Werbel attempts rather breezily to equate Eakins's late nineteenth-century worldview with the Enlightenment perspective of another "middling" (2) Philadelphian, Benjamin Franklin. Although Werbel briefly considers the question of historical difference, statements such as "Franklin and Eakins nonetheless define two ends of the same historical and cultural thread" (2) or "For Thomas Eakins, the same ideology informed his sensibilities" (150) treat these figures and contexts with a very broad brush. Another instance of historically unspecific interpretation occurs in the concluding passage to chapter 2, where the author adduces three memoirs by late *twentieth-century* physicians as evidence of "the profound distancing from conventional understandings of the body that emerge as an inevitable result of dissection" (49–50)—as if the study of anatomy were an unchanging, transhistorical phenomenon experienced identically by its practitioners in 1880 and 1980. Inexplicably, the author quotes those recent sources at length while only citing historian Michael Sappol's richly detailed critical study of nineteenth-century anatomy in a cursory fashion.

Finally, perhaps the most dissatisfying aspect of the book for this reviewer is its dearth of visual analysis. Think what you will about the Freudian/Derridean interpretation of Eakins and Stephen Crane offered by Michael Fried (presumably one of Werbel's "speculative" scholars), but his 1987 book remains a benchmark of formal investigation and historical inquiry precisely because it closely and innovatively relates specific technical practices of the artist to a particular nineteenth-century educational context of writing and drawing in Philadelphia. In stark contrast, Werbel treats paintings and photographs by Eakins in a perfunctory manner, with little description and practically no close reading or interpretation that alters existing understandings of the artist's work as *art*. Ultimately, the author's main concern seems to be biographical rather than art historical.

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*Stories from the Mines*. By THOMAS M. CURRÁ and GREG MATKOSKY  
(Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2007. 82 pp. Illustrations. \$25.)

*Stories from the Mines* is a companion text to a documentary film of the same name produced and directed by Greg Matkosky and Thomas M. Currá. The film and the book commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the Great Anthracite Coal Strike of 1902. A brief history of the Pennsylvania anthracite region—with extended treatment of the 1902 strike and the establishment of the Anthracite Coal Commission as part of the bargain to end the strike—is provided along with scores of photographs, other graphics, and a useful time line that runs through the book along the margins of its right-hand pages. *Stories from the Mines* is intended for a popular audience; the text without footnotes is based on