

Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser, with Richard L. Bushman, Stephen H. Kornhauser and Aileen Ribeiro, *Ralph Earl: The Face of the Young Republic* (New Haven: Yale U P, 1992), xiii + 258, \$60.00 (cloth).

Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser, principal author of this book which also serves as an exhibition catalogue, has succeeded in rescuing the strayed narrative of the career of Ralph Earl. Though he was previously consigned to the margins of early American portrait painting where in reputation, at least, he lurked in the shadows of assumedly greater artists like John Copley and Gilbert Stuart, now we have a full-bodied saga covering Earl's training, his misadventures, and his eventual successes in central Connecticut. Because Earl left little in the way of a "paper trail," Kornhauser has reconstructed his story mainly from his works and from the social patterns attributable to his patrons. What emerges here is first a rather normative account in which a talented young colonial returns to England for better training in the mysteries of easel painting. After refining his raw abilities, Earl then adheres to formulas of the academic mode of portraiture first during his English sojourn lasting some seven years and then in the United States after his return in 1785. What is surprising about Earl's work is that when he begins to attract numerous clients from the Connecticut valley after 1790, his style seems to change. His sitters are no longer rendered in romantic, hazy light, but stand out crisply as they and their property are inventoried with almost clinical precision. While Kornhauser suggests that Earl changed his style to match the plainer tastes of his new clientele so that he had to subdue or abandon his former academicism, Earl actually abandoned none of his studio-training. Indeed, his Connecticut paintings show that his ability to render convincing likenesses, complex textural qualities, and the details of landscape were, in fact, progressively improving.

The shift in Earl's mode of presentation, however, says much about Earl's sitters. As Robert L. Bushman demonstrates in his contribution to this volume, the richest citizens of the Connecticut valley went elsewhere for their portraits, leaving the second tier of emerging elites to deal with the likes of Earl. This group was evidently socially insecure and unsure in their taste in art and thus compensated by ordering paintings that were large, if not sophisticated, and abundantly filled with tokens of wealth and position: fancy clothes, expensive furniture, libraries of books, billowing drapes and imported floor coverings, plus views of family acreage and ancestral manses. Eager to secure commissions, Earl obediently depicted his customers in a manner that they found appealing. What was new about Earl's seemingly innovative mode of painting was less the style and more particularly his clientele.  
*John Michael Vlach, The George Washington University*

## BIOGRAPHY

Donald L. Miller, *Lewis Mumford, A Life* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), 512 pp., illus., \$24.95.

Among those who have studied the city and scrutinized the architecture that gives it form, few have been so venerated as Lewis Mumford. Historians have elevated him to a position close to sainthood for his singular contribution to urban and cultural thought. But if Donald L. Miller's recent in-depth biography makes one thing abundantly clear, it is that Mumford may have been rightly regarded as a prophet, but he certainly was no saint.

A man who felt he had to write things down in order to experience them fully, Mumford kept copious notes of his reactions to various urban prospects, and in particular, of his infatuation with New York City—its vitality, its walking scale, and its village-like wholeness. At the same time, he kept copious notes of other infatuations, notably the intense love affairs he carried on under the eyes of his knowing and almost pathetically indulgent wife, Sophia. Using the same care he lavished on his professional prose, he documented his affair with Catherine Bauer, for example. Over his objections, Ms. Bauer later came to be widely respected as a leading national expert on housing and planning. He

and the working conditions made the choice of illustrators a wise one indeed (it is hard to do watercolors in the pouring rain, after all). Most must have adopted a similar practice to that described by George Matthews Harding: "At the front I make as many as sixty sketches or notes during a trip, besides constant observations" (33). When conditions were more conducive, he turned these memoranda into finished works.

Cornebise is to be congratulated for the considerable effort that went into chasing down the originals from which he chose the plates printed here. In 1920, the American Expeditionary Forces turned over its collection of nearly 500 works to the Smithsonian. But besides this official collection, Cornebise has traced the whereabouts of many other works done by these men. This was necessary because of the arrangement made between the Army and the artists. The War Department was free to purchase any works finished by the men after their discharge from active service (which came pretty swiftly for them), but otherwise they would remain the property of the artists themselves. Thus hundreds of works became scattered in different collections.

Cornebise has written a scholarly, descriptive history to accompany the plates. He opens his discussion of these particular artists with a helpful thumbnail sketch of war art's traditions, paying particular attention to the United States. In subsequent chapters he (1) writes a brief biography of each artist up to his participation in the war, (2) describes the "daily travail" they faced in going about their business, (3) finishes the biography of each man by sketching the highlights of his life after the war, and (4) discusses the specific works represented in this book.

The two chapters of biography bespeak the work of a dedicated, specialized scholar, given as they are to describing the lives and works of talented though relatively minor men. (Though not household names, they did achieve notoriety within their own professional sphere). Cornebise inspires confidence that his scholarship is thorough and reliable, and his account is well-organized and clearly written. He has done the scholarly world a good turn.

Only the specialist will be inspired to attend closely to the somewhat dry accounts of the artists' lives, but the chapter concerning their work in France, the problems they faced at the front, the intentions of the army and the complaints lodged against them is much more interesting and also more useful to the generalist reader. His discussion of the plates is helpful in that it calls attention to common themes and to works done by different artists which can be grouped together by virtue of common subjects. However, his consideration of the works *qua* art is not as thoughtful as one might hope.

Cornebise is quite good at explaining the special interests and particular skills of each artist, and he is careful to describe particular fields of knowledge or realms of experience upon which a given artist could draw. However some important questions are barely raised, and certainly are not discussed systematically. The reader is left wondering what exactly the Army hoped artists could do that photographers could not. What were the artist's own thoughts on this matter? This question seems all the more appropriate in that the aesthetic of naturalism dominates these works with a heavy hand. What were the artist's thoughts on the rapid changes which had swept through the art world in the fifty years prior to the war? Was there something about the war or anything in their status as Army artists that kept them working so consistently in the realistic mode? Did they eschew more avant-garde techniques from personal proclivity or because they had a job to be done in a certain way?

Cornebise might well reply that he did not intend to write a piece of art criticism, but rather to accumulate facts, find artifacts, catalog examples and write a descriptive piece of scholarship. Fair enough, perhaps. Cornebise is not obligated to be an art critic or even an art historian to undertake such a project, and the scope of his book could not unaffectedly admit long deliberations about artistic fine points. Nonetheless it seems reasonable to question the extent to which obvious and pertinent artistic questions can be avoided in a legitimate book about art. *Matthew C. Stewart, Boston University*

tried to publish details of the relationship in his own autobiography, but she objected. He made certain that those details would emerge in print by giving Miller access to these most personal archives.

The planner who looks to Mumford today for his prescient defense of regionalism, the architect who salutes him for rediscovering the Chicago School in the 1920s, the urban designer who recognizes him for his "Sky Line" pieces that brought writing on the cityscape to readers of the *New Yorker* for over 30 years, may ask new questions about his life and work as a result of this book. Why was this man so thoroughly self-absorbed that he failed to notice the rising fascist movement in Munich when he visited there to examine modern housing in 1932? Why was he so guilt-ridden about his family that he had to write a glorified biography of his son Geddes, killed in action in World War II? Why was he so insecure that he kept records for posterity with little or no regard for the privacy of others? This uneven but fascinating narrative forces one to ask if and how these same personal qualities are manifested in his professional output. To what extent were his views on city life and form merely the personal reflections of a man frustrated by technology, uncomfortable with newness, and fearful of change that diminished his status as an independent intellectual?

The garden city was Mumford's proposed solution to the problem of preserving locality in a world of metropolitan culture, though he found it difficult to reconcile the practical inadequacies of garden city experiments with his own theoretical construct. His admiration for the medieval city, a place of true misery for many, if not most, of its inhabitants, tells us something about his own vision of community. His decision to live in the rural isolation of upstate New York, rather than in the cacophonous city, whose virtues he so extolled, tells us something more. Curiously, as Miller also notes, he traveled relatively little for someone who wrote with such authority on the cultural aspects of the urban landscape worldwide. His experience was limited to major cities in the United States and Europe.

Mumford shunned political activism as a course of action, preferring, Miller tells us, to sit outside of the political arena and criticize those struggling within it. Why did he cling to the vision of the vital urban village as utopia even as he saw the inability of evolutionary change to produce successful new urban places? Why did he show such a strong ambivalence toward federal intervention? As Catherine Bauer reminded him, politicians shape far more change than do philosophers.

Miller, an historian, focuses not simply on the many separate facets of Mumford's career, but on the synthesis that his career represented. Mumford managed to unify literature, architecture, planning, and cultural history into what eventually emerged as the scholarly field of American Studies. Despite the fact that nearly all that he wrote was an impassioned plea for regional thinking and decentralization, he is associated today with the city more than with the larger landscape of the region, and Miller offers only slight insight into why regional thinking met such an impasse in the United States. His intimate portrait, however, prompts us to ask more about the man who followed in the footsteps of Emerson and played such a key role in defining the discourse of American civilization. The troubling questions underlying this new biography are why did Mumford want so much to be remembered and respected for his personal conquests when his public conquest was so remarkable, and how was his own personality reflected in the history and philosophy that he wrote? *Jane C. Loeffler, The George Washington University*

James Reston, Jr., *Collision at Home Plate: The Lives of Pete Rose and Bart Giamatti* (New York: Edward Burlingame Books [Harper Collins], 1991), ix + 325 pp., illus., \$20.00.

Peter Edward Rose was raised a "river rat" in a west-end suburb of Cincinnati, a neighborhood that produced an astounding number of major league baseball players, coaches, and managers. Although not possessed of great basic talent, Rose had a durable