

Mrs. Chall's objectivity—in appraising the comparative strengths and weaknesses of the several formulas, and in frankly assessing the limitations that must be placed on use of the findings concerning readability—is particularly praiseworthy when one realizes that she and Edgar Dale are the devisers of one of the leading readability formulas now in use. As an objective lesson to the young researcher, this monograph serves a most important peripheral purpose in its demonstration of the reservations the careful scientist places on his own generalizations, and of the zeal for greater accuracy and validity with which he constantly tests his findings. The most valuable criticisms of readability study have come from the readability researchers themselves, who have subjected their work to the sharpest scrutiny in their search for the most accurate and reliable methodology. Any library school which boasts a program of research should require the reading of this monograph as an object lesson in the rigorous self-appraisal that characterizes scientific method.—*Lester Asheim, University of Chicago, Graduate Library School.*

## An Unhurried View?

*An Unhurried View of Erotica.* By Ralph Ginzburg, with an introduction by Theodor Reik and preface by George Jean Nathan. New York: The Helmsman Press, 1958. 128p. \$6.50.

Few people have the courage to admit in print to a knowledge of erotica. When such an individual does appear, and when his publication professes to evaluate and weave "choice samples of English erotic literature into an interpretive and explanatory text" (p. 14), librarians who are harassed by the difficulties of dealing sanely with the vexed question of "open shelf vs. closed shelf" in the matter of purple books must need sit up and take notice. Alas, in this instance as in so many previous ones, they will find no help.

With this review in mind I have studied the work in question hopefully and meticulously, but at the end I am forced to conclude that I can find no adequate excuse

for its existence. Its thesis is unsupported by exceptional information, impressive logic, or even novelty of opinion. Ralph Ginzburg's *Unhurried View of Erotica* flits fitfully and nervously from one faded blossom to the next. The "choice samples" are mainly from such obvious sources as Ovid's *Art of Love* in an unidentified translation but presumably that by J. Lewis May; Sedley's more mincing poetry; Defoe's *Moll Flanders*; Cleland's *Fanny Hill*; and the like. Many books one would like to see discussed are not mentioned. Only the most cursory attention is paid to the compulsion that has driven many ordinarily sober-sided authors to produce facetiae (Kipling, John Donne, William Blake, to mention only the first few to come to mind). The case (such as it is) for freer circulation and less stringent censorship of what the author calls "erotica" presents the same tired old arguments that have been stated far more convincingly by others.

Ginzburg's opus is dedicated "To the further liberation [24 pt.] / of man's healthier [36 pt.] / instincts" [48 pt., letter-spaced]. There is an introduction by a psychologist, Dr. Theodor Reik, who comments that "it is certainly unnecessary in this age of psychoanalysis to state that this book has great scientific value" (p. 8), and goes on to defend on psychoanalytic grounds the author's confused inclusion of "the scatological interest in the area of erotica" (pp. 9-10). The late George Jean Nathan adds in a short preface that the book "will go a long way to analyze and purify censorship of its muddy stink"—a promise which the text makes no discernible effort to fulfill.

What very definitely *has* happened, though, which Dr. Reik apparently feels must be defended, is that Mr. Ginzburg's "unhurried view" (which, after allowing for lists, quotations, blank pages, and the like, boils down to hardly more than fifty pages of widely leaved comment) wilfully expands a word that has a very precise meaning to include every connotation that is contained in the term "dirty story." He takes, he says, the definition of erotic as given in *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*—"Of, relating to, or treating of sexual love" (p. 20). "This is, admittedly," he apolo-

gizes, "an exceedingly broad definition," but it obviously is not broad enough for his purposes. To assume, as the author seems to do, that everything uttered behind the fan as well as everything that is nasty and obscene can be grouped under the general term "erotic" is an appalling rewriting of the dictionary. It follows that Mr. Ginzburg's essay is confused, misleading and—to me if not to psychoanalysts such as the author of the introduction.

The work proper (the adjective is loosely used) consists of seven chapters dealing with the subject in roughly chronological sequence, a bibliography of a hundred titles which are apparently required reading, and an index. Anglo-American pornography is purportedly discussed from its inception to Frank Harris, but the discussion is at best arbitrary and sparsely supported. "In the English language," comments the author (p. 26, "erotic is just about as old as the language itself." A few pages later he reverses this with the thoroughly astonishing assertion that "genuine, 100%, lip-smacking, cheek-flushing erotica and pornography did not make its [*sic*] appearance until the Restoration period in the latter 17th century" (p. 37). This completely overlooks Chaucer's joyously ribald tales by the miller and the reeve, Sir John Harington's various opuscles on the Ajax theme, and the many lusty Elizabethan translations of foreign writings from classical times to the Renaissance. There is no thought of the wealth of medieval fabliaux and earthy folk-tales—a wealth which England certainly shared, as any student of early literature should know. Instead, the author dates the beginnings of English pornography in the writings of such purveyors of pallid naughtiness as Sir Charles Sedley, whom he quotes at length, in the time of Charles II. Thereafter the essay concerns itself with the varying themes and forms that have characterized English pornography through the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. There is a chapter on "First American Works," which concludes with a few mild excerpts from *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and the memoirs of Frank Harris, another on "Reference Works," and a final discussion of "The Erotic Book Market Today."

Ginzburg's essay holds little that will be new to any reasonably well-read student of English literature, either in thesis or in the citations. But toward the end of the book (pp. 103-108) there is a section devoted to the whereabouts of certain great repositories of erotica, including public, semi-private, and private libraries both here and abroad. At this point the present reviewer is able to judge the validity of one of the author's most categorical statements. Among the libraries specifically credited with the ownership of notable collections of erotica is one that is intimately known to me: *there is no such collection there!* This assertion risks my being included in Mr. Ginzburg's coterie of "blushing, stuttering, almost hysterical" librarians who deny to serious scholars such as Mr. Ginzburg the existence of erotica in their institutions. I do not deny the presence in the library in question of isolated purple works, because that is a term that is broad enough to include the Song of Solomon; I do most emphatically deny the presence there of a consciously-formed "preeminent" collection of such works. The author's falsification of the record in this instance renders all of his similarly unsupported comments suspect.

Of all the various sections of the book, however, the "Bibliography of One Hundred Titles" (pp. 117-125) is the most baffling. It contains not only bona fide erotica and pornography, but also works of bibliographical and ethnological reference. It is pointless to try to evaluate this list, because nowhere does the compiler set forth his criteria for inclusion or exclusion. The form of his listing is at best haphazard, being sometimes ridiculously full and sometimes scant to the point of uselessness. Only a minority of the books on the list are discussed at length, while, on the other hand, several that are given full treatment in the text are missing from the list.

Nevertheless one cannot dismiss without some comment the bibliography from which the author dangles his essay. At the outset (p. 20) he avers that "this treatise is concerned with the hard core of some 2,000 titles of classical erotica in the English language." How that number is arrived at we are not told; perhaps we are entitled to as-

sume that the author has read that many English pornographic books. The selective list, however, does not restrict itself to English works; it includes without apology writings in Latin, Italian, German, and French, as well as translations from most of those languages in addition to Chinese, Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit. Even so, fewer than 150 titles out of the "hard core" of 2,000 are so much as mentioned by name anywhere in the book, and the omissions are as significant as the inclusions. How can any study profess to deal with the impact of the erotica theme on Anglo-American letters while ignoring the writings of Casanova, Brantôme, Poggio, Rabelais, Margaret of Navarre, Boccaccio, Balzac, and so on and on? If it is objected that these are not English, one may point out that they have all been translated, and this is more than can be said of certain of the inclusions in the "Bibliography." But a dirty story is a dirty story in any language, and in fact the Urquhart-Motteux translation of Rabelais, for example, is etymologically far more Anglo-Saxon than any rendering of de Sade that comes to mind.

To anyone who has not read Ralph Ginzburg's *Unhurried View of Erotica* this review may seem unduly harsh if not in fact carping. I must confess that neither the book itself nor the muddled purpose that prompted its writing justified as much space as has been given here. A truly useful work on the subject of pornography, if ever one is written, will certainly *not* rely on sly reprintings of permissible excerpts that promise more delectable passages to the reader who is able to ferret out the complete text.—*Roland Baughman, Head of Special Collections, Columbia University Libraries.*

## A Model for Small College Library Surveys

*The Alma College Library: A Survey*, by Richard B. Harwell and Robert L. Talmadge. Chicago: The American Library Association, 1958. 41p. \$2.00.

Though surveys of libraries of national importance attract the attention of alert li-

brarians, it is unusual for a survey of a library of lesser rank to be of much interest to anybody outside the institution's own constituency. The survey of the Alma College Library is an exception. It is exceptional because it deals with the all too common case of the undernourished small college library, a case which will cause increasing concern as small colleges are called upon to assume a greater share of the burden of the growing college enrollment. It is exceptional, too, because it is so well done that it can serve as a model for other small college libraries in need of appraisal.

Conducted under the auspices of the American Library Association by the executive secretary of the Association of College and Research Libraries and the associate director of libraries of the University of Kansas, the survey was "part of a program of long-range planning under way on the campus of Alma College." In line with this purpose, the report describes and evaluates the present status of the library and offers both immediate and long-range recommendations.

The description and evaluation are detailed enough to be thoroughly convincing of the need for remedial measures. The recommendations are concrete enough to serve as a good blueprint for action. And the whole is presented in a remarkably lucid style, a style which is persuasive in itself.

What the Alma College Library needs most of all is money. Having suffered through a period of inadequate support it must now be given not only a proper annual budget but also emergency appropriations. Dealing with one aspect of the library after another, the surveyors demonstrate serious weaknesses which require emergency treatment.

Appraisal of the collections on the basis of a general examination, a careful scrutiny of shelves in the reference room and in the active section of the stacks, and by sample checking against the Lamont catalog, results in the conclusion that of a recorded total of sixty thousand volumes only about a third are useful for the present curriculum of the college. Vigorous weeding and vigorous acquisition are both in order. For a start of the weeding program the surveyors offer examples of long out-of-date titles