

## Reality Revisited: From A to Z

**Igor D. Radovi**

Amazon KDP

(404pp)

978-0-9897131-2-2

*Reality Revisited is a thought-provoking, ranging reference guide with plentiful material for discussion, debate, and entertainment.*

Igor D. Radovi's *Reality Revisited* is a sometimes satirical reference book that functions as a playground for word lovers, with A to Z commentary on a variety of general interest topics, ranging from "answers" to "Zurich."

Opening with an admission that its work is deliberate about delivering its understatements, overstatements, and contradictory points, this is a book that makes a real effort to convey the inconsistent and fluctuating state of "reality." This complexity is expressed in varying ways: single terms sometimes come with more than 100 definitions, for example. The book's alphabetical, dictionary-like format supports its mission to the audience—to help them process and categorize a massive amount of information. Still, the book's addendum does not complement this overarching organization, and the fact that the book elects to break its established patterns disrupts its work at taming wide-ranging subjects.

Many entries are written with edgy sensibilities. The entry for "music, contemporary," for example, delivers a beating for its subject, calling it "noise" for classical devotees, while that for "free press and information media" discusses both as prone to misleading and brainwashing the masses; "editor"s are connected to censorship and are said to be deficient at simplifying subjects. Such personal opinions threaten to alienate those who dispute the book's bristling critical positions.

Still, there are many other definitions that ring more universally true. There are resonant, astute observations that encapsulate particular experiences well, as with the entry for "Rewriting, revising and editing," which conveys the three as existing in a never-ending cycle that must be stopped with deliberation and intention. Similarly, the book's comparison of "writing" to an "infection" with no cure is wry but realistic, and its connection of "words" to poets' and writers' "deeds" captures their essence in a simple and impactful phrase.

Positive entries, as with the twentieth one for "perseverance," are sometimes buried within the book, left to be uncovered among the more negative definitions. The book's upbeat description of a "beautiful sunset," and its hopeful entry under "future, promising," result in some balance in the collection, helping it to represent a wider spectrum of experiences. And the book's descriptions of the beauty of Vancouver and vibrancy of Zurich are enthusiastic, though the latter is compared to Geneva in a dangling phrase that trails back into negativity.

The book's evasion of gender-neutral language leads to some exclusionary sensibilities. Some of its references to women begin with recognition of their talents, but then box them into traditional roles, like homemaking and parenting. The book's suggestions that women are the only successful ones at mastering these roles are dismissive of men's abilities, too.

Though it has some blind spots, *Reality Revisited* is a thought-provoking, ranging reference guide with plentiful

material for discussion, debate, and entertainment.

ANDREA HAMMER (July 13, 2021)

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