

# Rowse Reviews

Volume 4 Number 6

November 20, 2002

If the text is blue a mouse click will take you somewhere, just like links on a web page.

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<http://wexfordpress.com/wexrowse.html>

## Comment

This is the new online version of *Rowse Reviews*, dimensioned to better fit your screen. We have added some pdf trickery as well, including lots of color and embedded links. To get to a particular review just click on its name under “In This Issue.”

You can still print this version out but the pages will be landscape oriented. If you would prefer a black and white paper copy, 8 1/2 x 11, saddle stitched pamphlet, just send \$3.00 and your U.S. Mail address to us. You can use PayPal if you wish (see our web page) but be sure to give us a valid mailing address. Comments on the new layout are welcome.

## Fiction

### Historical

#### *India Treasures*

☆☆☆☆

Gary Worthington  
TimeBridges Publishers  
Sept 2001  
5.5 x 8.5in, maps, illus.  
640pp.  
\$15.95

Pathways Book Service  
800-345-6665  
FAX 603-327-2073  
TimeBridges Publishers LLC  
1001 Cooper Point Road S.W.  
Suite 140-#176  
Olympia, WA 98502  
ISBN 0-9707662-0-3

We delayed too long in reviewing this book. The sheer size of the novel (we estimate it at about 450,000 words) was enough to put it on the bottom of the pile. When we finally cracked the pages we had a treat in store. To use a sports metaphor, this book reads as if it came down from a higher league. It is an order of magnitude better than most the fiction we see for review. Worthington has labored for almost two decades gathering the background for this book. He has put all this research to use in exemplary fashion. Too often the historical novelist stops the action periodically while he lectures on the details of time, place and fact. Worthington instead weaves it all together smoothly and the plot proceeds without noticeable pause.

*India Treasures* has all the essentials, characterization, plot, locale and first rank writing. It reminds us of *Tales of the South Pacific* in its episodic form. But all these episodes tie together in the overall plot.

The book is set in several time periods, from the time of the Lord Buddha to the era of Indira Gandhi. The central focus is on a treasure hidden in an ancient, but still used, palace. The protagonist is not Indiana Jones but the civil servant Vijay Singh, a low caste “Untouchable” who is passing as a member of a higher caste. He is sent on a tax collection raid to an ex-rajah’s castle near his own home village. Immediately there is tension—he may be recognized by someone and revealed as a poseur.

Worthington creates an authentic ambience of time and place in India ancient and modern. He offers us a cast of believable flesh and blood characters who face realistic problems. He sets his scenes with authority

and a grasp of detail. In short he has put together a very good book that is exciting even to our jaded taste.

Indeed, we labor like treasure seekers ourselves, panning for a golden volume among all the gravel. Every once in a while we find a nugget. *India Treasure* is such a nugget, a fortunate find indeed.

***The Far Side of the Moon***

☆☆☆Jonathon Pearce  
Balona Books  
December, 2001  
Printed by  
Infinity Publishing.com  
Paperback 5.5 x 8.5in  
137pp \$11.95

Balona Books  
2017 West Hammer Lane  
Stockton,CA 95209  
able209.MediaOne.net  
209-477-2123  
ISBN 0-7414-0910-0

Jonathon Pearce usually writes humorous fiction about the mythical small town of Balona, CA. In *The Far Side of the Moon* he sticks to his rural Northern California locale but essays a serious piece of historical fiction based on the true story of Japanese immigrants of the 19th century. There is of course the gentle humor and characterizations his fans have grown to expect. But the tone is more serious and the tale a bit sad.

This novella (all Pearce's books run about 30,000 words) is his best effort to date. No potboiler this, but a labor of love for the author. Although this is fiction he references his sources and defines the less familiar English and Japanese words in a glossary. We give it three stars and wish it well. Since the plot involves adolescents of differing ethnic backgrounds growing up and learning each other's cultures the book might be suitable as a middle school reading assignment. But adults will not find it beneath them.

The type is quite large and there is adequate leading. The non-hyphenated text betrays its Word Processor origin. Still it is not a badly made book, though a the print is a bit dark, particularly on the running heads.

## Romance

### *Dead Weight*

☆☆

Diane Sherlock  
Creative Caffeine Press  
March 2002  
Paperback 5.5 x 8.5in  
162pp \$13.95  
Printed by  
Booklocker.com, Inc.

Creative Caffeine Press  
11684 Ventura Blvd Suite 168  
Studio City, CA 91604  
818-985-4088  
ISBN 1-59113-063-8

Sherlock mixes SCUBA, romance and sunken treasure in a fast-moving adventure that will appeal to women. Told in the first person and largely in the historical present tense, the novel stars a divorcee in search of a new life. She finds it, plus a younger man, sex, and adventure all starting with a SCUBA class.

But is the new man the right man? Will adventure turn into danger? If you are an *aficionado* of the genre you can fill in the blanks.

The SCUBA detail is authentic and the characters three-dimensional. Excellent hammock reading, *Dead Weight* comes to market at just the right time.

We note a pattern emerging in fiction books printed by booklocker.com. The type is small and the leading a bit tight. Unfortunately either the typesetter or his/her software confuses an em-dash (—) with an hyphen (-). The layout is plain (not a bad thing); the only decoration a line of italics at the start of each chapter. It is a clean appearance but the bifocal set would appreciate an extra point or two on the type and the leading; this reviewer would appreciate attention to details like the em-dash.

***Willful Ignorance***

☆☆☆

Diane Sherlock  
Creative Caffeine Press 2001  
Paperback 5.5 x 8.5in  
184pp \$13.95  
Printed by  
Booklocker.com,Inc.

Creative Caffeine Press  
11684 Ventura Blvd Suite 168  
Studio City, CA 91604  
818-985-4088  
ISBN 1-59113-062-X

Diane Sherlock is trying to fill this issue of “Rowse Reviews” all by herself.

This earlier effort is has more substance, a more complex story line and better characterizations than *Dead Weight*, also reviewed in this issue. There are in fact two story lines and two sets of characters with their paths crossing in a bar in Costa Rica —*Grand Hotel* style. The style is more conventional, with an omniscient viewpoint and no use of the historical present.

The principal characters, Dr. Ryan Parker and single mom Jayne find each other via computer online chat. They find their way to a putative medical convention in Central America. There they interact with two more members of the medical profession, Linda and Avery, and a barmaid named Tina. There are complexities, plot twists and several surprises.

Our earlier comments on typography and layout apply here also. Bigger type and more leading are needed.

More than just a hammock diversion, this adventure/romance is a women’s book that men will enjoy as well. We give it three stars.

Peggy Stiegmann assisted with this review.

## Adventure

### **Joshua**

☆☆

David M. Besaw  
Trafford, 2001  
Paperback 6 x 9in  
268pp \$16.90 (US)

Trafford Publishing  
Suite 6E, 2333 Government St.  
Victoria, B.C. V8t 4P4  
Canada  
sales@trafford.com

[www.trafford.com/robots/01-0459.html](http://www.trafford.com/robots/01-0459.html)  
1-888-232-4444 FAX 250-383-6804  
ISBN 1-55369-057-5

This book is actually better than its blurb would suggest. The cover letter states that *Joshua* "... covers Jewish History, Middle East Politics, apocalyptic beliefs and international espionage." Who needs such a mish-mash? But the book itself is set mostly in Iran, and is a decent thriller with realistic action scenes and three-dimensional characters. True, the hero pauses now and then for long philosophical debates, but one can skip over those parts.

Besaw has done his research and his Iran has the ring of authenticity. There is a second problem however. Besaw writes as if English is his second or third language. The narrative is often awkward and the dialogue stilted. A small sample:

"Your pensive manner is creating voids in this house. Even the children recognize it. You are here in person but not in mind. You don't remember their schedules. What are you going to be like in Iran? I think you need professional help to release yourself of the burden you carry. Are you going to be as you were after this trip?"

Enough already! And Besaw occasionally dangles a long phrase masquerading as a sentence. This imperfect grasp of his medium, together with the digressions into secular Jewish angst, flaw the book significantly.

Fans of adventure fiction, folks interested in the Near East, and especially those whose origins trace back to the region will find this book worth their time and money. But the digressions, the awkward phrasing, *oy veh!*

## Western

### ***Two Hearts***

☆☆☆

Dennis O'Keefe  
Parintel Books 1998

Paperback 6 x 9 inches  
311 pp. \$15.00

Parintel Publishing Co.  
4195 Valley Fair Street #104  
Simi Valley, CA 93063

ISBN 0-9702160-1-7

Dennis O'Keefe is winning awards for his fiction and no wonder. He has developed a style reminiscent of Lary McMurtry in his darker moments. His attention to authentic detail and craft of story telling is second to none. We recommend *Two Hearts* for all fans of the Western genre and indeed for all who like a good story well told.

This earlier work (we don't have the full chronology of O'Keefe's works in hand yet) tells another tale of Marshall Colt Patterson. This time there is a bittersweet love story between Colt and a beautiful Chinese woman called Maggie. Others included in his well-filled cast are the evil poisoner Elroy, the Indian mystic Atsidi Chun, and another, quite different woman, Kathleen. Colt survives unbearable hardship only to lose both Kathleen and Maggie. In the process he learns to modify his unrelenting hate of the Red Man. At the end he survives for another day, and another story.

A careful reader of O'Keefe's Westerns will note some repetition of scenes and situations from novel to novel. This, and the almost unrelieved dark tone of the works are the only criticisms we lay at the author's door.

Again we recommend O'Keefe and again we award his work three stars.

***Freedom's Menace***

★

W. Laurence Willis  
Hot Lava Publishing  
December, 2001  
Hardcover 5.5 x 8.5in  
403pp \$24.95

Hot Lava Publishing  
233 Loggers Trail  
Saint Louis, MO 63026  
HotLavaPub@aol.com  
www.TrevorBriceNovels.com  
209-477-2123  
ISBN 0-9716765-6-9

Willis has studied the adventures of James Bond and Indiana Jones. His protagonist is cut in the same heroic mould. The action is non-stop and the pyrotechnics spectacular. If the characterizations seem a bit cardboard few will notice—the action sweeps one along. Fiction and drama require a willing suspension of disbelief. The reader of “Freedom’s Menace” must be more willing than usual. Set in the near future the book describes a mammoth face-off between the U. S. and China. Agent Trevor Brice is tasked to investigate the sighting of a Chinese submarine in a hidden pool under a volcano in Hawaii.

The premises are a bit over the top. The struggles in the Near East and in Northern Ireland have been conveniently solved. The hero gets his orders written out in longhand from the President of the U.S. without intervention of other staff. The leader of China wears silk robes and is a devout Buddhist. Giant diamonds of unrivalled purity are involved (remember “Moonraker?”) All this is good fun, but one misses the gritty realism of, say, John LeCarre (not to mention the towering talent with language.)

Despite the moderistic trappings this is a classic “Yellow Peril” novel. One looks for Doctor Fu Manchu lurking in the shadows. But the prose is reminiscent of another ancient *genre*, hardboiled detective fiction. Author Willis plans a series of these novels, all centered on the volcanoes of Hawaii.

This pricey hardcover novel with the colorful slipcover displays some astonishing idiosyncrasies as soon as it is opened. It is set in the raggedest of ragged right type. The paragraphs have both indentation and vertical spacing to delimit them. Either someone doesn’t know the rules or doesn’t care. Hopefully someone will pass Willis a note telling him about the conventions of interior design. One gets to break the rules only after one has demonstrated an understanding of them.

## SF—Fantasy

### ***The Road to Shamballa***

☆

Steven Graham Charles  
Dancing Ground Press  
February 2002  
5 1/4 x 8 1/4 in  
148pp \$15.00

Dancing Ground Press  
P. O. Box 11509  
Las Vegas, NV 89111-1598  
[www.DancingGroundPress.com](http://www.DancingGroundPress.com)  
702-365-5831  
FAX 702-254-2247  
ISBN 0-9702632-0-1

*The Road to Shamballah* is space opera in the best sense of the term. A young man grows up while battling the bad fellows of outer space. The book also emphasizes family relationships, grandfathers telling stories of outer space to grandchildren. Although there are occasional bouts of bad language this book can be recommended as young adult fiction.

We have our usual nits to pick, although this is not the worst presented book we have read this week. The typeface is entirely too dark. The hyphen is used where an em dash is called for. The chapter heads, all forty of them, are extra-bold *and* underlined. The ellipsis has somehow grown one or more extra dots. The contraction “it’s” is consistently used where the possessive “its” is needed. The narrative wanders in and out of the historical present tense with no particular pattern discernable.

The *Star Trek* conventions are followed—all aliens are anthropomorphic and all atmospheres are breathable. There is never a problem with gravity on the space ships. Hey, it’s space opera, but a lively version thereof, populated with characters that are not made out of cardboard. *The Road to Shamballa* is a good hammock read for the summer.

## Nonfiction

### Dual-language

#### *Dao De Jing*

☆☆☆☆

David H. Li, PhD  
Premier Publishing Company  
2001  
6 x 9in  
264pp. bib., index, 9 appendices  
\$20.00

Premier Publishing Company  
P. O. Box 341267  
Bethesda, MD 20827  
1-888-777-7024  
ISBN 0-9711690-0-4

The *Dao De Jing* of Lao Tzu has been translated many times. David Li admits to having read more than 70 translations. But this has to be the definitive treatment, by the formidable scholar David Li. Even those ignorant of the Chinese language will gain insight into the poetic form, rhetorical technique and philosophy of Lao Tzu as exemplified by this landmark annotated translation and study of the treatise/poem.

The author, David Li, is worthy of study himself. One of his earlier works (he has published 20 books) was a ground-breaker on the subject of self-publishing. Although time has rendered much of *All-by-Yourself Self Publishing* (1996) obsolescent it is still valuable in the areas of setting up the business, and unique on the subject of author-crafted Cataloguing in Publication data blocks. His description in that work of his genteel battles with the Library of Congress are edifying. For the record, in his current work only the lack of the notation CIP will distinguish its block from one issued by the LOC itself. He has the rest of the arcane codes down pat. Eat your heart out, Quality Books.

A translation but far more than a translation, Li's book compares the *Dao De Jing* with Confucius, with Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, with contemporaneous Greek thought and with the work of 20th century physicists. The breadth of Li's scholarly interests is, well, breathtaking.

But the poem's the thing in this case, and Li is bold enough to present a true interlinear translation, exposing both the ancient poem and his own scholarship to scrutiny by Occidentals as well as those fluent in Chinese. No other translator of this work has been so brave.

*Dao De Jing* translated by David Li makes available a fascinating and famous work by Lao Tzu. It also allows the layman a chance to view a consummate scholar at work. The self-publishing community can be proud to number Dr. Li in its ranks.

***The Lonely Queue***

☆☆☆

Icy Smith  
East West Discovery Press  
2000  
Hardcover 9 x 12  
195pp. bib., endnotes  
\$39.95

East West Discovery Press  
P. O. Box 2393  
Gardena, CA 90247  
310-532-1115  
ISBN 0-9701654-0-4

*The Lonely Queue* is dual-language and also dual purpose. From one aspect it is a very handsome presentation volume, beautifully made, and guaranteed to make any Chinese-American proud of the history of his predecessors in Los Angeles during the last century and a half. On a deeper level this calm factual book is a searing indictment of yet another crime of deliberate abuse perpetrated by the Caucasian majority on the people of an ethnic minority.

Libraries and schools need to shelve this book. No other work documents the history of the Chinese minority in Los Angeles so well. It is not always a pretty story, but it is an inspiring study of success against great odds and almost unbelievable prejudicial treatment.

The photos show the happy faces of Chinatown residents in their best clothes posing for a rare photograph. The text tells the story of their successes, but also of riots, forced removals, and terrible legal disabilities.

In addition to the author's thorough research the book is enhanced by the design work of Albert Lin and the Chinese translation of Emily Wang.

***Versos sencillos por Jose  
Marti***

☆☆

Paul Hoffmann (trans.)  
Hoffmann Press  
2000  
6 x 9in Saddle stitched  
43pp. Vocabulary, Questions  
\$5.00

Hoffmann Press  
770 James Street  
Syracuse, NY 13203  
hoffmannopress@aol.com  
ISBN 0-970051-90-5

This chapbook offers eight poems by the Cuban patriot Jose Marti in side-by-side translation. Each poem consists of quatrains, rhymed in various patterns or unrhymed. The language is simple but elegant. The themes are nature, affection, death, emotion.

Each stanza stands alone. In the original or in translation, one is moved by the simple grandeur of the thought:

“I know of a terrified buck  
That turns to the fold and expires,—  
And of a tired heart  
that darkly dies without rage.  
”

“Yo se un gamo aterrado  
Que vuelve al redil, y expira—  
Y de un corazon cansado  
Que muere oscuro y sin ira”

Those who teach Spanish, or who are interested in Cuban history, may wish to send for this book. And those who admire poetry may find these verses worthy in the original and in translation. The price is modest and quantity discounts are available.

The volume has a Spanish-English vocabulary suited to the content, and a series of questions suitable for classroom use.

## Publishing

### ***The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing***

★★★★

Tom & Marilyn Ross  
Writers Digest Books/F&W 2002  
Paperback 6 x 9 521pp.  
indexed \$19.99

Communication Creativity  
P.O. Box 909-NR  
Buena Vista CO 81211  
Marilyn@About Books.com  
www.CommunicationCreativity.com

800-331-8355  
ISBN 1-58297-091-2

The Ross book is the standard by which other books on self-publishing must be measured. No other book has so much information on the field. The coverage is authoritative and in most cases up-to-date. Nothing succeeds like success. This book on self-publishing is now offered via a traditional publisher. The authors have diligently rewritten the book and have added both topics and hundreds of new pages for the current edition.

Like most such books *The Complete Guide* is entirely too optimistic. The chapter on subsidy publishers discusses (honestly) a topic best dismissed in a sentence or two. The chapter on financing would have the publishing wannabe putting up their house and their life savings on what is always a chancy venture. None of the books on self-publishing talk sufficiently about the downside; the Ross book is no worse than the others in this respect.

Today it is brutally difficult to keep up to date on publishing technology. "The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing" covers in detail prepress topics glossed over or neglected entirely by competing authors, including Poynter and Sansavieri. Unfortunately the PDF revolution has not yet caught their attention. They barely mention the format.

The Ross book is the best in the field. But even this encyclopaedic work needs to be read with caution. And supplemental reading in Poynter, Sansavieri *et al.* is prudent. A self-publisher can never have too much information or do too much research.

## ***The Self-Publishing Manual***

☆☆☆☆

13th Edition

Dan Poynter

Para-Publishing 2002

Paperback 5.5 x 8.5 430pp.  
indexed \$19.95

Para-Publishing

P. O. Box 8206-380

Santa Barbara, CA 93118

800-968-7277

Fax 805-968-1379

orders@ParaPublishing.com

<http://ParaPublishing.com>

ISBN 1-56860-073-1

*The Self Publishing Manual* is one of the two must-have books for the self-publishing genre. Like the Ross book Poynter's book packs great amounts of pertinent information into one low-cost volume. The author continues to update his book every one or two years while publishing many others on the same or similar subjects. Others in the self-publishing clan refer to Poynter as the 800 lb gorilla of the field. This is his signature work. Which is better, Ross or Poynter? Both are excellent, both have weaknesses. So for the personal bookshelf we suggest both, and others as well.

Like many successes in the field Poynter is at heart a salesman. In this book he sells the concept of self-publishing, offers much advice on marketing, and of course promotes his many other offerings, from audio tapes to printed reports.

He makes it all sound too easy. Self-publishing is for most a brutal business, requiring much labor for uncertain rewards. But even as we reread our latest version he is stoking our fires anew.

Poynter continues to give confusing and sometimes contradictory advice on the pivotal questions of typesetting and layout. His own books tend to oscillate between excellent and mediocre. In the 13th edition (which was typeset using the low end program Ventura Publisher) he states on page 87:

**“TYPESETTING** can be done with your word processing program and laser printer.

**LAYOUT** Can be done with your word processing program, or it can be automated somewhat by pouring the file into a page layout program such as Microsoft Publisher, Pagemaker, Indesign QuarkXpress or Ventura Publisher.”

On page 341, dealing with electronic books, he gives much better advice:

“...Or they may be given a more professional polish by using page design and layout programs ... These programs will aid in page design and refine the page layout and typesetting of your book beyond that of standard word processing software.”

And in the much handsomer book *Successful Nonfiction* (2000) he offers perhaps the best advice:

“Your typesetter and book printer can deliver any format you wish. Just give them some guidance.”

Poynter in the year 2000 used Cirrus Design for his layout and typesetting. The layout of the Poynter books we have seen from that era was exceptional. His offerings haven't reached that level of excellence since, although it is quite acceptable.

Like many of the *genre* Poynter's book is in large part a book of lists. Appendix 2, “Resources for Publishers” runs 22 pages (38 pages in the previous edition) and has many hundreds of valuable entries. One could spend weeks on the internet and not assemble half this information.

Electronic publishing, including e-books, short run digital and POD printing, are covered in a new chapter. He does not cover POD *publishers* such as Booklocker.com and 1stBooks.

In sum you can have either Ross or Poynter, with caveats as noted. But if you are serious about self-publishing it makes sense to have both.

***Everything . . . About POD  
Publishing . . .***

☆☆

John F. Harnish  
Infinity Publishing.com  
2002  
Paperback 5.4 x 8.4  
606pp. indexed \$24.95

Infinity Publishing.com  
519 West Lancaster Avenue  
Haverford, PA 19041  
www.buybooksontheweb.com  
877-289-2665  
610-520-2500  
FAX 610-519-0261  
ISBN 0-7414-1121-0

This is a big book with an enormous title: *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About POD Publishing but Didn't Know Who to Ask*—hereinafter called “the book.” Settle back—this will be a long review also. This is the *magnum opus* of POD Publishing’s strongest voice of advocacy. John Harnish is an “author’s advocate” employed by Infinity.com. Clearly he loves his job and the whole POD Publishing movement. The book is full of fascinating material not found anywhere else. The author’s enthusiasm and painfully honest approach make us want to really like this book.

Unfortunately the book exemplifies much of what is wrong about POD published books. It has an overlong title and perhaps the most garish layout we have ever seen. Huge serif type is used for chapter headings. The chapter entries in the Table of Contents are followed by short topic headings that unfortunately have no page numbers attached. The author’s two favorite type styles are bold and italic, with inappropriately placed Sans Serif coming up third.

The author offers an apology up front for using Microsoft Word, stating that he wanted to build his book using the tools that his customers used. There are two passages much later in the book that bear on this choice. In one he describes his discomfort with being forced to use WordPerfect instead of MSWord by his first potential publisher. This is what drove him into the arms of the predecessor to Infinity.com.

To be blunt Harnish could have done a very much better job of formatting his material even within the limitations of a bottom end product like Microsoft Word. He could do even better with a more sophisticated product like WordPerfect, had he taken the time to learn it. He should not apologize for using the Word Processor, but for using it badly.

Later, a quoted essay by Mike Swedenborg begins “You must learn to use the Word Processor before you begin to write your book.” The essay goes on to describe the horrors awaiting the novice attempting to use Microsoft Word for typesetting. Thank goodness we are exempt from all that! And instead of formatting the book first and then writing it as Swedenborg recommends we prefer to write the book with a few inserted tags, and tweak the final format later.

The cited essay also recommends using both the spell checking and grammar checking features of the word processing program. As Harnish himself points out, those who rely on such tools are leaning on two very slender reeds. Our policy is that if you can’t spell, can’t handle English grammar, and can’t edit your own work with a critical eye, find a new avocation.

Harnish’s twin presumptions, that real typesetting software is too expensive and that therefore POD books must be keyed in and typeset using a Word Processor program are both absolutely wrong. You are reading a review keyed on a free editor program and typeset by a free, and very sophisticated, typesetting program.

Sometimes Harnish’s passion for his own employer’s business model leads him astray. He asserts as fact that POD Publishers do not review and reject works based on a qualitative assessment. Yet competitor Booklocker.com by their own report reject 70% of what is submitted to them. And once a book is rejected they will not consider it again. Frankly that business mod-

el gives us more comfort than the “we print anything” business model.

So what is good about this badly flawed book? As it turns out there is much to praise. He conducted extensive surveys of POD publishers, asking them some pertinent questions such as

- Why did you decide to publish your book with a POD publisher?
- If you were publishing your book today, what would you do differently?
- What have you been doing to promote your book?

...and so on. The answers to these questions are extremely valuable to all of us. They reinforce the theme that publishing is no longer the problem, marketing is. Many POD publishers wish they had engaged the services of a proofreader and/or a copy editor before rushing to print. Not a few regret misunderstanding the traditional review process and schedule.

Another valuable feature is the inclusion of (in somewhat condensed form) the heart of Penny Sansavieri’s seminal work *Get Published!*: a list of POD Publishers, their offerings, terms and prices.

Reading the book one gets the sense that at some point Harnish became weary, and his usually good sense of grammar and style deserted him. We quote the following without comment:

“How this fits on my bookshelf is because of reading about the ways self-publishing is attempting to mimic traditional publishing and thereby sensing the veiled put-downs regarding *POD publishing* because it’s very different than the costly way of doing commercial press runs, and a major change for the better than the way traditional publishing has always been.”

Harnish could improve the value of his book by concentrating more on the how-to and less on the lengthy arguments with POD detractors. This tendency gets less sufferable as one plows through the book. We have already mentioned layout and typography.

It bears noting that an index set in Helvetica is odd and annoying. And no professional indexer would include 73 page references for a single term! Even if the option of indicating page ranges were taken (an indexing technique apparently not known to his indexer) the number of page references remaining would be way beyond any reasonable maximum.

It is not the worst presented book we have seen, however. Infinity.com’s execrable sales piece *Become a Published Author* holds that distinction. Happily most of the client books they publish are at least marginally better than their own product. The shoemaker’s children, it seems, still go barefoot. We weep a little.

***Successful Nonfiction***

☆☆☆

Dan Poynter

Para-Publishing 2000

Paperback 5.5 x 8.5 142pp.

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In *Successful Nonfiction* publishing guru Dan Poynter practices what he preaches. Handsomely made and cleverly written, it is at once an abundantly useful book and a fit example of how to do it right.

Poynter abandons the traditional chapter-section-subsection organization of most non-fiction books and instead deals with 124 aphorisms, one per page. The aphorism is stated in a header line, restated in a subtitle, then explained in a few sentences. A pertinent example is narrated, and finally a suitable quotation is appended. Different typefaces distinguish the five elements on each page.

The result is a book that reads quickly yet conveys much pertinent information. The reader's attention does not flag and useful advice is located without difficulty.

The one-page-per-topic organization is not unique. It enjoyed a vogue in the 1960's and 1970's in documentation of systems. Nevertheless *Successful Nonfiction* utilizes the format as well as we have seen it done.

Some of the topics are repetitive, and occasionally the advice borders on contradiction. But the overall impact is positive and instructive.

This is a candidate for the most handsome book offered to us for review. The gold embossed cover with French flaps, the pertinent cover illustration, the distinctive endpapers and of course the excellent interior design set a standard to be emulated. Yet it retails for a low price.

We strongly recommend this book to authors, self-publishers, and those who simply admire well-crafted books. The content is provocative. Additionally it sets a new level for design and presentation of the paperback nonfiction title.

***No More Rejections  
Get Published Today!***

☆☆☆

Penny C. Sansevieri  
Infinity Publishing.com  
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When we reviewed the first edition of this book, under a shorter title, we stated: “Sansevieri has put together one of the truly useful books on self-publishing. No one else covers the world of POD and On Line publishers in such detail.” We have no reason to reverse that judgement. Indeed by pursuing an annual update Sansevieri has declared her intention to play in the big leagues with Ross and Poynter.

So what is new about this book—what is better—what still needs attention?

The author has enhanced the readability of the book by way of pertinent (and sometimes impertinent) quotes at strategic points. The layout has been freshened, and a better cover and bright white paper in place of cream makes the previous edition look a bit dull in comparison.

Although the content is similar, the central feature of her offering, the section on Print on Demand Publishers, (POD) has been updated and expanded with new vendors and in some cases more complete data. As before she devotes two pages or more to each such vendor, including a chart with data on pricing, time-to-print, discounts, promotion effort (or lack thereof) and so on. Coverage of these vendors is the greatest strength of the book.

...*Get Published Today!* also offers the author’s views on the Amazon.com ranking system and gives extensive coverage to other marketing and publicity issues and resources. Practical marketing detail is the other great strength of ...*Get Published Today!* The media resources section has been heavily edited, with additions and subtractions.

On the other hand necessary details like getting an LCCN and sources for CIP data are omitted again. ...*Get Published Today!* has neither. There is no discussion of layout and typesetting, or of frontmatter design.

The layout is good—the cover better than before—but for some reason an oddball body font is used. This is better than the previous sans-serif typeface, but we wish authors and layout artists would remember that a body font is like a butler, there to serve, not to be noticed.

The dimensions and page count have changed in part because of a switch of POD vendors. Essentially it is the same book in content and length. We find the title a bit odd. Is the first phrase part of the title or a subtitle placed first? In either case we find it a bit confus-

ing. The spine only shows the second phrase, so that is how we deal with it in this review (with a leading ellipsis to cover all bases.) The author is inconsistent on this point in her marketing materials. Heaven help the library or bookstore cataloger who has to choose between “N” and “G” for alphabetic placement of the book.

Once again we would not suggest that this be the only self-publishing book on your shelf. But in its areas of concentration it is still the most complete, authoritative and current offering around.

***The Publishing Game: Bestseller in 30 Days***

☆☆☆

Fern Reiss

Peanut Butter and Jelly Press 2003

Paperback 5.5 x 8.5 207pp.  
indexed \$19.95

Peanut Butter and Jelly Press

P. O. Box 590239

Newton, MA 02459

Phone/FAX 617-630-0945

orders@PublishingGame.com

ISBN 1-893290-88-3

... *Bestseller in 30 Days* is a significant addition to the self-publisher's library, offering both in-depth coverage and a unique, calendar based sequence.

Make no mistake, Fern Reiss has figured all the angles and covered all the bases. Instead of one encyclopaedic work covering everything she has subdivided her work *The Publishing Game* into three books, with in-depth coverage of part of the information in each. Instead of a single sale she hopes for two or three to each customer. Do the math.

The three titles are:

- *The Publishing Game: Publish a Book in 30 Days*
- *The Publishing Game: Bestseller in 30 Days*
- *The Publishing Game: Find an Agent in 30 Days*

The bad news is that these titles exceed the 30 character limit for a *Books in Print* Listing. If she is unlucky all three will be entered under the first three words, causing endless confusion. We wish her better luck than that.

The title *Bestseller in 30 Days* may be a bit of hyperbole but the step-by-step plan with target dates will, if followed to the letter, at least ensure some success in a reasonable period of time. Marketing is the theme, and most authorities will agree that the marketing plan is the most important element for success.

Reiss doesn't miss a detail, from reminder postcards sent to bookstores to the arcane rules for qualifying for a CIP. Her presentation is crisp yet thorough.

The book is itself a good example of the self-publisher's art. The review copy has some messed up typesetting, but the author assures me that

all this will be cleaned up in the final version. In other respects the book is handsome, with a better front cover than any of the others mentioned below.

The serious self-publisher needs to refer to the Reiss book, the Ross book, the Poynter book, if POD is a factor then the Sansavieri book or the Harnish book—have you blown your book-buying budget yet?

***Publication Production using Pagemaker***

☆☆☆

Gordon Woolf  
The Worsley Press  
March 2002  
Paperback 6 x 9 1/4  
192pp. indexed  
\$34.95

FAP Books Inc.  
P. O. Box 540  
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Fapress@worldnet.att.net  
888-511-5125  
FAX 6352 331 6003  
ISBN 1-875750-17-7

*Publication Production using Pagemaker* is a guide for users of Pagemaker 7, and especially those involved in laying out serial publications such as newspapers or magazines. It is based in part on the author's earlier works covering earlier versions of Pagemaker.

Clearly the author knows his stuff. Woolf's book reflects his four decades in publishing and an intimate hands-on experience with Pagemaker over many years. The book itself is a fine example of the skills of an accomplished book designer and layout artist.

Many books of this type are written "on assignment" by a generalist technical author and offer little more than a rehash of existing user manuals and guides. Woolf's book is a happy exception. He covers what the manual doesn't and provides an expert tutorial for the Pagemaker user. Woolf pulls no punches when it comes to the shortcomings and failure points of the Pagemaker product. He guides the reader around the land mines and pitfalls.

The book expands beyond just Pagemaker with sections covering Photoshop, prepress plugins for Adobe, typefaces and even the next step forward in the Adobe product line—InDesign.

Many useful Pagemaker scripts are available at the author's website. A username and password is provided to give access to these resources.

At *Rowse Reviews* we don't use Pagemaker. But we are hanging on to the review copy for future reference, just in case.

## Art

### ***Drama in the Desert***

☆☆☆☆

Holly Kreuter, editor  
Raised Barn Press  
2002  
10 x 10 in hardcover  
Includes 75 min DVD.  
142pp \$45.00

Raised Barn Press  
556 Haight Street PMB #232  
San Francisco, CA 94117  
[www.RaisedBarnPress.com](http://www.RaisedBarnPress.com)  
ISBN 0-9721789-0-2

Subtitled *The Sights and Sounds of Burning Man* this book and DVD combination defies ordinary description. Annually since 1986 San Francisco artists have gathered to display art and ultimately burn it. Starting with two guys on a nearby beach torching one life-size effigy the event has migrated to the Nevada desert and grown to 30,000 participants. Although the venue has changed the event is pure Northern California. Salvador Dali would feel at home here, but might be shocked by the communal mud bath. Andy Warhol would have been too retro, too representational to fit in.

Think of Woodstock, a Rose Bowl parade, the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games, a half-time show, a new-age commune, and a Nevada desert version of a San Francisco coffee house and you may get some of the flavor of the event. But maybe not.

The participants are mostly Caucasian, mostly thirty-something, (though gray beards and gray heads are amply represented) and drawn in large part from unemployed and underemployed high tech types. We saw no children.

The book is an extraordinary piece all by itself but the DVD steals the show. With no commentary and no dialogue the disk shows the sights and sounds of the happening, capsuling several years worth of video and stills into a single montage. Artistic effects abound, and the spectacular desert sky is a major player in the mixture. The promo mentions interviews but we haven't unearthed them yet. The menuing system on the DVD is a bit esoteric and of course very artistic.

This is not an event devoted exclusively to erotica and nudity, but those elements are frequent flyers here. The communal mud bath looks like fun though some participants seem embarrassed; a nude man stands like a mannequin while others mill about; a very explicit pair of grotesque statues seem an exemplification of Easter Island meets *Sheila-na-gig*; a young woman stands demurely by her companion dressed only in sunscreen and resembling a living Greek statue; nude but painted dancers resemble self-propelled Easter eggs.

Mobile art is another major factor. A vehicle and several trailers make a motorized, segmented lizard. A sedate, chintz covered living room sofa moves across the desert with three citizens comfortably seated—the exotic suspension, balance and propulsion systems hidden by the skirt of the slip cover. One of our favorites is a child's red wagon, followed by another slightly smaller red wagon towing a yet smaller red wagon followed by...

At night flames and high tech lighting keep things moving. One string of enormous gas plumes remind the true Californian of Signal Hill. And of course the

grand finale consists of burning most of these carefully wrought works of art including the signature Burning Man. But our favorite nighttime display is the butterfly, limned in neon-like light emitters, flapping its wings in the desert darkness.

The book that accompanies the DVD features some very innovative typesetting effects and audacious layout, setting forth poetry, photos and narrative. As typesetters ourselves we wish we knew how to duplicate some of those effects. Everything about the book is top drawer. It is printed in Singapore.

We are not fans of the San Francisco artsy-crafty set, free verse, new age music and the rest. But we have to be fans of this book and the festival it describes. It is truly a happening, and some real talent created the book and the DVD comprising *Drama in the Desert*.

Whatever your cultural and artistic persuasion, treat yourself to a bit of the wild side, and savor a groundbreaking tribute to a unique artistic happening. The more we peruse *Drama in the Desert* the better we like it. Both book and DVD are simply stunning. We give the combination four stars.

***PhotoArtistic Views of HumanNature***

☆☆☆☆

Peter H. Sust

PhotoArt Productions

December 1 2001

Hardcover 15 x 12in

112pp \$60.00

PhotoArt Productions  
2380 North Wilcox Road  
Stockton, CA 95215-2318  
209-931-9571  
FAX 209-931-2808  
ISBN 0-9677502-4-5

We have never seen a more beautiful volume in our nearly seven decades of viewing and appreciating books. Cuban-born Peter Sust has put together a compendium of 100 salon-quality photos in pairs, each pair illustrating a facet of the world as presented by humankind (on the left) and nature (on the right.)

Occasionally the contrast is puckish, a country road and a battered Roadmaster bicycle. Frequently it is just stunning: An abstract sculpture with a single strong vertical accent and on the right a forest of trees permanently bent from the prevailing wind — except for one vertical rebel.

His subjects were captured on the continent of Europe and in the American West. Every print could be cut out and framed. Happily, the publisher allows the admirer to have his beauty on the wall without desecrating the volume — prints are available in sizes up to 40 inches on paper or canvas — for significant prices one presumes.

Nothing about this book is cut-rate, from the photos themselves to the paper they are printed on. The retail price is hardly cut rate either, but you get what you pay for.

This book (with a trilingual introduction) is also marked “Volume 1.” Can the next volume equal the first? Only time will tell.

This book is too big, and too beautiful, to fit on a library shelf or a bookstore rack. You will just have to order it. Order two copies, one for yourself and one for your best friend or most important client, and hang the expense.

***Nature's Palette***

☆☆☆

Michael Thomas Impellizzeri

Im Publishing

2002

11 x 8.5in

158pp \$27.95

IM Publishing

3855 Cape Cole Boulevard

Punta Gorda FL 33955

ISBN 0-9658427-2-X

The author presents a beautiful set of nature photos worthy of any viewer's contemplation. Unfortunately it is not always clear to the viewer if certain blurred images are deliberate or merely the result of a poor printing job. Since the photographer admits to using multiple exposures and camera shake for artistic effect we will give the printer the benefit of the doubt.

The range of subjects is broad and some of the camera angles striking. Except for some petroglyphs nothing man-made intrudes on the scene. Using photographic techniques only, no computer embellishment, the artist tries for dramatic and unexpected effects. Most of the time he is successful.

Impellizzeri embellishes the photos with a text narration of his photographic adventures and his personal reactions to what nature has presented to his lens.

Altogether this is a pleasant book, worthy of contemplation at a time and place where no distraction intrudes.