

Book Reviews

Renata Povolná
Interactive Discourse Markers in Spoken English
Brno: Masaryk University, 2010

Bruce Fraser once compared the study of discourse markers to a growth industry in linguistics, with a regular flow of new articles published every year. This trend has not changed in recent years, and one could ask the question whether such a development is positive or negative and whether anything still remains unsaid on the topic. It is evident that these varied linguistic elements, which surpass most grammatical categorizations, draw constant and relentless attention from researchers into discourse coherence. The reasons for this concern are strongly rooted in the multifaceted nature of discourse markers, and stepping onto this terrain involves repeatedly identifying the roles and functions of these expressions in current genres and text types.

The book under review here, *Interactive Discourse Markers in Spoken English*, is based on Renata Povolná's long-term research on the subject of discourse markers in spoken discourse. Its intention is to offer the reader a comprehensive, though not exhaustive, overview of and access to a subject field to which the author has made a distinctive contribution reflected in a number of research publications. Povolná's research presented in this book had an earlier incarnation as a habilitation thesis; the book also mirrors the author's intense interest in the relationship between coherence and cohesion, which finds its application in Chapter 5.

As the author puts it, this multifaceted character of discourse markers lies in their ephemeral structural essence. They are rather 'loose' elements in the sentence: they carry non-propositional, procedural meaning, they help segment and frame the discourse, and they are metalinguistic in nature since they refer to the interaction among the discourse participants. The interactive quality of these devices has become the central constitutive criterion for the present research – indeed, 'interaction' is another aspect and focus of Povolná's long-term study of coherence in spoken language.

Traditionally, discourse markers have been referred to through an array of (mostly synonymous) labels, including pragmatic particles, monitor features, interpretative signals, metalinguistic monitors, or hedging devices. Most academics would agree that all these terms basically attempt to reflect the research perspective applied. One may ask why Povolná, aware of such terminological density, decided to introduce another term for the elusive concept of DMs, thus making the situation even more obscure. However, the rationale behind the choice is, in harmony with the author's previous research, to draw attention to the fact that the forms under investigation taken from spoken discourse possess strong interactive force. In contrast to much research in the field so far, which has focused rather on structural aspects of discourse markers, the author sees IDMs as primarily interactive devices: they smooth the path of interaction and thus help perform various pragmatic functions. One further justification for employing a new term may be that most of the above-mentioned labels for DMs refer to language phenomena that do not fully subsume the clausal forms under investigation here, such as *you know*, *you see*, *I think* or *I mean*.

The research is corpus-based; the author chose three genres, private face-to-face conversations, private telephone conversations and public radio discussions, from the *London-Lund Corpus*. One might be surprised to learn that the texts under scrutiny, being taken from this corpus, date back to 1958–1975. The reader may wonder whether such ‘mature’ data in fact reflect present-day language use, and, subsequently, whether or not the author slightly contradicts her own claim about the leading edge of unconscious change and development in any language being typically found in its natural conversational texts (p. 7). Nevertheless, the choice of corpus is understandable since it is the only corpus (apart from the *Spoken English Corpus*, the composition of which is not suitable for the purposes of the present research) that is prosodically transcribed. Transcription details in the *LLC* provide a unique source of contextual information, which the author makes use of in subchapter 4.1.4 in her analysis of prosodic features in IDMs. One further limitation of the *LLC* is that, although it includes rich prosodic annotation, it consists mainly of conversations that are limited to academic settings (staff and students at London University). Nevertheless, the texts do represent the kind of authentic language data the author was seeking.

The book comprises nine chapters, out of which especially Chapter 4 and 6 present the rationale for the research, discuss central notions of the study of interactive discourse markers, and partly summarize the author’s results and findings. In Chapter 4, the longest and most comprehensive in the book, Povolná outlines the criteria used to recognize the IDMs; the final section is devoted to the pragmatic functions of these devices. Despite the large quantity of notions discussed and reviewed here, the reader is not led astray, which is due to the many illustrative examples offered. Chapter 6 presents a detailed analysis of the IDMs that are used in politeness strategies. The author claims that Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory is not easy to apply to the corpus data used; she argues that the wider surrounding text is an infallible guide to interpreting most IDMs. Except for a rather short chapter (the eleven-page Chapter 5 on Cohesion and Coherence), the average length of the chapters is between 25 and 50 pages.

Overall, the book provides a rich read. It covers almost all kinds of phenomena studied under the label ‘(interactive) discourse markers’ in spoken language. If we return to Fraser’s take on discourse markers, Povolná offers a valuable perspective and does not needlessly duplicate current publications in the field. She diminishes the gap between what we know about discourse markers and their crucial role of enhancing interaction in spoken discourse. Moreover, this is a pioneering publication on this subject in the Czech context. The book is a well-balanced body of broadly usage-based work which may not only serve to strengthen the field, but also should inspire future research. The book’s quality is enhanced by the richness of the data, demonstrated in numerous charts and tables and then carefully interpreted. Moreover, I highly appreciate that the book has an exhaustive index. A book of this level of intensity provides a solid platform for further genre-driven research in an area of natural native-like spoken discourse.

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Rosemarie Morgan, ed.
The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy
Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010

The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy includes contributions from some of the most prominent Hardy specialists today including Gillian Beer, Timothy Hands, Dale Kramer, Phillipp Mallett, J. Hillis Miller and Rosemarie Morgan. It offers an overview of Hardy scholarship at the same time as it suggests new directions in Hardy studies. The volume, especially designed for scholars and advanced graduate students, is an important critical basis for Hardy studies in the twenty-first century.

Divided into nine parts, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy* incorporates a wide range of Hardy-related topics, including bibliographical studies, historical and cultural context, Shakespeare's influence on Hardy, bodies of knowledge and belief as they influence Hardy's poetry and prose, new critical approaches, genre and case studies, illustrators and biographers, and Hardy and the millennium. Each part is discrete, following logical steps in what the editor describes as "the researcher's trail" (13). The aim is to encourage a new generation of scholars "to chart hitherto unmapped fields of Hardy's world" (19), creating a sense of exploration and discovery that will lay the foundations for further research.

The volume is flanked by two bibliographical studies that provide a comprehensive and up-to-date listing of Hardy-related titles, including manuscripts, books, ephemera and artefacts, with an emphasis on manuscript material and significant collections of printed books as well as secondary materials. The comprehensive index enables easy orientation in the wide range of Hardy scholarship covered in the volume.

Part II, "Historical and Cultural Context", discusses "Hardy and popular Victorian culture", "Hardy in a Time of Transition" and "Hardy and the Law". William Davis's chapter on Hardy's lengthy career as a magistrate and his research into the law is particularly interesting as it illuminates two important but all-too-often neglected influences upon Hardy's writing career.

Part III examines one of the earliest and most profound literary influences on Hardy's work – William Shakespeare. In "From Stratford to Casterbridge: The Influence of Shakespeare", Dennis Taylor stresses that no major work connecting the two authors has as yet been published. Taylor methodically traces the steps by which Shakespeare influenced Hardy's sense of himself as a writer, from childhood through to the writing of *Desperate Remedies*, focusing on the passages Hardy annotated in his copy of Shakespeare that he bought in 1863.

In the chapter following Taylor's, Rosemarie Morgan and Scott Rode demonstrate that rural Dorsetshire, the Wessex of Hardy's prose and verse, equipped him with a bountiful education in imagination. Wessex constitutes a parallel universe to the landscape of Hardy's childhood, its folkloric traditions and oral histories.

Part IV, "Bodies of Knowledge and Belief", is a particularly interesting section, covering Hardy's metaphysics, Christian faith, evolution, astronomy, scientific humanism and music in poetry. Of special interest is Kevin Padian's chapter on "Evolution and Deep Time in Selected Works of Hardy", which treats the concept of "deep time" and "evolutionary legacy", demonstrating how these interact with some of the populational processes

that include natural selection in the context of Hardy's works, particularly *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Padian argues that Hardy internalised and used these concepts more than any other Victorian novelist in order to draw out the contrast between the events that involve his characters' lives and the spatial and temporal background against which they are set.

Focusing on psychology, gender and the cinema, Part V, "Critical Approaches", illustrates the need to update research in each of these areas. Film productions based on Thomas Hardy's work have increased in recent years, stimulating interest among scholars and indicating a significant shift in scholarship. From being only a marginal area in the 1990s, film productions in the twenty-first century have given rise to a large number of books, articles, web-based resources and university courses on Hardy.

Part VI, "Genre and Case Studies", features a particularly interesting chapter by Phillip Mallett, "Hardy and Masculinity: *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and *Jude the Obscure*". In exploring the nature of Victorian manliness and speculating on new forms of male and female sexual identity, Mallett examines the processes of becoming a "man", calling into question received notions of masculine identity.

The neglected area of "Illustrating Hardy's Novels" is examined by Ian Rogerson in Part VII. Rogerson presents a comprehensive survey of the history of illustrated magazines, artists' techniques, and Hardy's periodical publications that were illustrated, including a generous selection of the illustrations themselves. Rogerson concludes that the world of periodicals helped to establish Hardy's reputation and formed the foundation of his developing literary success. Part VII concludes with Phillip Mallett's "Hardy and the Biographers", which discusses a range of Hardy's biographers, from his contemporaries to the present. As Rosemarie Morgan notes, "none emerges unscathed" (19). Mallett argues for a new reflexivity and a willingness to permit different interpretative possibilities. While the last two decades have witnessed many attempts to theorise life writing as a complex field, no postmodern "Life of Thomas Hardy" has as yet been written.

Part VIII features contributions from some of the leading Hardy scholars today, ranging from Tom Paulin, who contemplates the feel, sound and sense of three of Hardy's best-known poems ("In Time of 'The Breaking of the Nations'", "The Self-Unseeing" and "Proud Songsters") to J. Hillis Miller, who discusses how Hardy uses the word "hand" in his "Hands in Hardy".

The "Thomas Hardy Bibliography" with which the volume ends comprises no less than seventy pages, covering collected works by Hardy, Hardy's novels, short stories, poems, drama, criticism of his books, short stories, poetry and drama, Hardy's non-fictional works, biographies (books and articles), musical settings (including CDs), audio and electronic works, film studies, video performances and journals dedicated to Hardy. What is missing from this section, which is otherwise very comprehensive, is a separate section listing doctoral theses on Hardy and Hardy-related areas, indicating the range of subjects addressed and Hardy's considerable popularity internationally. A few important and very recent titles are also, and perhaps inevitably so, missing, including Eithne Henson, *Landscape and Gender in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy* (2011), Richard Nemesvari, *Thomas Hardy, Sensationalism and the Melodramatic Mode* (2011), and Andrew Norman's *Thomas Hardy: Behind the Mask* (2011).

The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy is nonetheless one of the most important critical publications on Thomas Hardy to appear in the last couple of years and a fine tribute to the sensitivity and extraordinary insights into form and content of one of Britain's most important authors. It is as such a worthy successor to the *Oxford Reader's Companion to Hardy* (ed. Norman Page, 2000).

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Nieves Pascual Soler

***Hungering as Symbolic Language: What Are We Saying When We Starve Ourselves*
New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2011**

The discipline of food studies is a recent addition to academic discourse, shifting its attention from a pragmatic approach dealing with the production, preparation and consumption of food and the complexity of its global distribution towards a more philosophical and metaphorical treatment. This shift has allowed food to be discussed in a more interdisciplinary fashion, thereby opening up new areas of academic research within a wider socio-cultural context. After answering the initial questions about the necessity of food as a basic physiological need, food studies expand their scope of interest to areas such as philosophy, literature, history, anthropology, cultural studies and other areas, posing questions about the relationship of the individual to food and the environment, the ethics of food consumption in global context, the connections between food and history, the interrelations between food and tradition, and discussions of how food changes the human body and identity. The fact that such an academic treatment of food is a relatively new area of study makes food studies an extremely interesting and exciting field, especially considering the fact that food is an issue which concerns all of us. The evidence that food is our primary interest is reflected in the growing media coverage and publishing industry of food in all its possible forms, ranging from discussions about the health benefits of particular foods to the vast number of cooking shows which have given rise to a new form of celebrity, the celebrity chef. Recent years have also seen the emergence of TV channels dedicated entirely to food and cooking as well as a number of new, even glossier magazines about what to eat, how to eat it and why to eat it.

Undeniably all of these representations of food are linked with much more complex societal values related to health, economy, standards of living and also to the obsession with appearance based on food consumption, along with the emergence of eating disorders. The alarming statistics concerning eating disorders starting at a very early age suggest clearly that the issue needs to be tackled more seriously. In literary narratives, food is

discussed in a more symbolic way in order to reveal more profound connections related to it. For instance, did you know that cooking and eating can reveal the nature of the crime in a detective story? This kind of innovative approach is taken by Nieves Pascual Soler in her book titled *A Critical Study of Female Culinary Detective Stories: Murder by Cookbook*, published in 2009.

The topic of food seems to have caught Pascual Soler's attention as she deals with a similar theme in her latest book; however this time she examines the absence of food – hunger – rather than food itself. In her book *Hungering as Symbolic Language: What Are We Saying When We Starve Ourselves?*, Pascual Soler analyzes the language of hunger and its symbolic interpretation in a variety of fictional and non-fictional narratives through which she proposes a new redefinition of hunger. She states that her book concerns those who are “addicted to eating nothing” in a world in which there is plenty of food (12). The central idea of Pascual Soler's book is that “hunger is lived as an emotion”, and she foregrounds this assumption on social constructivism, suggesting that emotions are cultural responses of bodies whose experiences are culturally constructed. This notion is elaborated through the psychological theory of affect, which has thus far omitted hunger from its categorization. Pascual Soler fills this gap on the basis of a variety of approaches to emotion such as Darwin's, James', Sartre's and Freud's, but she also integrates more contemporary theories such as those of S. Tomkins, R. Brennan and T. Lazarus. In other words, Pascual Soler elevates physiological hunger to an emotional level and argues that hunger is no longer an instinct but an emotion.

It is admirable to see how precisely Pascual Soler perceives and defines such elusive terms as emotion and affect, and how she supports her arguments using a wide spectrum of theories from the natural and social sciences. The ability to bridge the gap between theories based on natural sciences and those based on the humanities makes Pascual Soler's arguments highly persuasive; she outlines an interpretation of hunger as a deterministic physiological need which overlaps with a symbolic interpretation as something powerfully abstract. Both these approaches to hunger are based on Zoltán Kövecses' conceptualization of emotion as a metaphor. According to Kövecses, emotions are conceptualized in a number of source domains, and Pascual Soler uses this categorization to interpret the metaphor of hunger over five chapters – based on metaphors of the second skin, the secret, the journey, the pastime and the bounded space. The epilogue focuses on the metaphor of the divided self, i.e. the relationship between the body and the self. Before outlining her theoretical findings and defining hunger affect in more detail, Pascual Soler emphasizes the fact that “hunger” is by no means a novel concept in literature, before proceeding to a thorough historical investigation into the history of “hunger” as a universal cross-cultural emotion.

Through the image of the container, the author examines how hunger is transformed into a second skin which protects us against an over-stimulating environment. In other words, Pascual Soler links the physiological reactions of the skin to emotion, drawing on Anziu's term ‘skin Ego’ in order to demonstrate her arguments on metaphors of the skin. The author explains how skin metaphors are used by those who suffer from eating disorders to conceptualize an internal space. By reading these metaphors, the lives of those sufferers become immensely complex worlds with their own rules and rituals (which can be better understood through Pascual Soler's interpretation), and it enables us to see

self-starvation as something which goes beyond the restrictive medical label of “eating disorder”. As she poignantly explains, the term “eating disorder” is actually rather imprecise; she states that, “by not eating, the intent is to order” (12), thereby suggesting that the aim is to put things back into their normative state. On the other hand, the author also demonstrates that hunger can be read as a fulfilling experience, pointing out that the addictive nature of fasting can become empowering and drawing comparisons with the world of religious mystics who starve themselves in order to find enlightenment. However, Pascual Soler does not go so far as to defend self-imposed hunger; she seeks instead to explain its profoundly psychological, emotional and secretive nature.

The secretiveness of hunger is dealt with in her second chapter, in which self-imposed hunger is compared with the real hunger of poverty. Here, Pascual Soler looks at fiction which suggests how hunger can be transmitted across generations, for example from mother to daughter and vice versa. She goes on to point out that the contagious nature of hunger suggests that it may be in the process of becoming a new disease. In the second part of this chapter she looks into the non-metaphorical treatment of hunger in the controversial life of the Nobel Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú Tum and her treatment of hunger in relation to poverty in Guatemala.

Hunger as a journey is elaborated in chapter three, in which the author examines how food can be related to real memory, as is demonstrated by her reading of Marcel Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past*. The connection between food (or rather the lack thereof) and historical memory is discussed in a variety of Cuban narratives showing how famine can function as a dehistoricization of reality. She also makes reference at this point to the connection between obesity and melancholia.

Chapter four looks at hunger as an artistic spectacle, examining its voyeuristic connotations and also ways in which hunger can be interpreted as an urge to write. These connections are made using an interesting variety of genres ranging from Franz Kafka’s short stories to the more contemporary hunger stunt performed by the illusionist David Blaine in 2003. Although hunger is often regarded as a feminine concern, Pascual Soler also looks at male “hunger” in David Krasnow’s novel *My Life as a Male Anorexic*, reminding us that anorexia is a problem which crosses all gender boundaries.

Pascual Soler’s reading of hunger is amplified in chapter five, in which she draws connections between hunger and architecture. She looks at hunger through architecture in order to reflect on how the hunger affect informs and shapes space itself. As she states, “it shows that hunger is produced by modern and postmodern architectural spaces” (28).

There is no doubt that Pascual is an immensely innovative scholar and she can successfully connect concepts which would not initially seem to be linkable. It is unusual to come across a work which is so specifically oriented and yet which can offer insights across so many other academic disciplines. The author not only shares her own deep knowledge of the subject, but also makes a number of pertinent suggestions for areas of future study on the topic of hunger. The choice of narratives used in the book, which include novels, autobiographies, testimonies, health manuals, newspaper articles and memoirs, only accentuates how little has been researched in the subject of hunger; it also indicates that the topic of hunger would benefit greatly from an interdisciplinary approach. Thus her book can be read as a work of literature, philosophy, culture and gender, but also as a work of physiology, medicine and therapy. It can also be read as a testimony of those living through the

metaphors of hunger either as victims of eating disorders or as victims of real life famine in the third world. Each chapter can be read separately or as a part of the whole, which is suggestive of the cycle of hunger as an emotion from which the “hunger” addict never really escapes.

What is striking about Pascual Soler’s book is that, despite its academic nature, it can be read as a very practical work for those dealing with eating disorders on a medical level. The interdisciplinary nature of the book clearly implies that medical conditions should be treated in tandem with the psychological issues of the sufferer, and therefore this book would also be beneficial for therapists, psychologists and sociologists dealing with the treatment of eating disorders.

Hungering as a Symbolic Language is unique in its innovativeness, the complexity of its ideas, its structure and in its practical application. In discussing her chosen topic so thoroughly, Pascual Soler comes across as having more than just an academic interest in the subject of the symbolic language of hunger; she herself seems to be hungry for more answers. The symbolic interpretation of hunger in her work suggests that we all suffer from a universal hunger for something beyond that which fills our physiological needs.

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Nick Johnstone

***Patti Smith: A Biography by Nick Johnstone*
London: Omnibus Press (Revised edition), 2012**

The book *Patti Smith: A Biography by Nick Johnstone* is the latest attempt to write a biography of Patti Smith, one of America’s most influential singers. The book was originally published in 1997, and its revised version came out in May 2012.

The book tells the story of the most important moments in Smith’s life which shaped her personality, influenced her artistic visions and work and led to her international success as an artist, a poet and a singer. *Patti Smith: A Biography by Nick Johnstone* focuses in particular on Smith’s youth and the people who strongly inspired her during that time of her life, such as Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Jean Genet, Amedeo Modigliani and Hélène Hébuterne; it also describes the time she spent in New York and performed with The Patti Smith Group and her later life as a married woman and mother in Detroit with her husband Fred Smith, a member of the band MC5. As this is a revised version of the book, it contains a new section covering her life and especially her career up to the present day – more precisely to the end of 2011. However, it pays little attention to her personal

life after the death of her husband; it stresses mainly her career – writing, recording and touring all over the world.

As Johnstone is a writer and a music journalist, known for contributing to magazines such as *Mojo*, *Melody Maker*, *Music Week*, *Clash Magazine* and many others, the book is largely based on many quotes and excerpts from magazine reviews and interviews. Quotes from members of Smith's band as well as from other musicians – such as Lee Ronaldo, the co-founder of Sonic Youth, or Peter Buck, the co-founder of R.E.M. – are frequent, and they express the musicians' attitudes towards Smith and her music. Ronaldo and Buck place particular emphasis on her first CD *Horses*, stressing its importance and contribution to rock'n'roll music, as well as its significance for them as musicians. They were also inspired by her performance style. For Michael Stipe, the lead vocalist of R.E.M., Smith is one of the biggest sources of inspiration; he claims in the book that he has been touched by her lyrics since his childhood. The book also includes comments from magazine journalists such as D. D. Faye and other personalities from the world of art such as Andreas Brown, the owner of New York City's Gotham Book Mart Store. Such comments are very important, as these people were the insiders; they were the part of the music and underground scene when Smith came to prominence and they help to paint an authentic portrait of her sensitive personality, which also explains a lot about her music. D. D. Faye witnessed the inception and the progress of her whole career; they talked a lot about art, music and its tradition, sexuality and its effect on her performances. Excerpts from such conversations are included in the book. Andreas Brown was also an important person for Smith's creative life, as he supported her in writing her unusual and distinctive poetry inspired by the Cursed Poets and painting. His comments help us to gain a deeper understanding of her artistic visions.

Nevertheless, it is also important to mention other contributions made by *Patti Smith: A Biography* by Nick Johnstone. As has already been mentioned, Smith's youth and the early years of her career make up the majority of the book. This is the reason why her idols are described in detail. In-depth information about them helps the reader understand how she was inspired by them, how they contributed to her work. Smith admired their romantic-tragic idea of life as an outcast from society's codes. She was seeking to be as real as them; she wanted to be ahead of her time. She also shared with them an attempt to find a kind of consolation in art. These attitudes reveal a lot about her "punk" attitude towards life, which is also presented in the book. This information will be appreciated especially by those who were not familiar with Smith's work before reading the book. Besides these idols, the biography also focuses on people who encouraged Smith in her creative life and supported her from the very beginning of her life in New York. Thus it also includes personalities such as the playwright Sam Shepard, the singer and artist Bob Neuwirth, the member of The Patti Smith Group Lenny Kaye, the manager Steve Paul or the previously mentioned Andreas Brown.

A further benefit is that the book provides information not only about Smith's musical career, but also about her whole creative oeuvre, including her poetry and art, as well as each and every album she recorded. It contains detailed information about the releases of her records, including their covers, and how they were received by audiences and critics. Moreover, it also contains brief analyses of some of the songs, sometimes enriched by Smith's own comments. This helps the reader understand Smith's sometimes abstract

lyrics and the origins of her songs and poems, as well as deepening our knowledge of her views on the meaning of art and creativity.

When comparing the book with Smith's autobiography *Just Kids* (2010), the reader realizes the differences from the very beginning. *Patti Smith: A Biography by Nick Johnstone* is an overview of her entire career with emphasis placed on certain personal issues presented from the objective point of view. *Just Kids*, on the other hand, is more like a book of memoirs focusing on the beginnings of her creative life, her life in New York and especially her familiarization with New York's underground scene and her relationship with Robert Mapplethorpe (whose impact on her life – and her art – was enormous). Compared to *Patti Smith: A Biography by Nick Johnstone*, the book *Just Kids* is a very personal work. It contains detailed information about her life and sometimes even intimate moments from her youth that had far-reaching consequences for her future life. It does not focus on her career but on the process of her becoming an artist, presented from her own point of view. As an autobiographical work, it represents a good source of insight into her personality and her attitudes towards art and music. As such, *Just Kids* can serve as a counterpart to *Patti Smith: A Biography by Nick Johnstone*. Together, they give the reader a complex portrait of their subject.

Patti Smith: A Biography by Nick Johnstone is an essential book for any reader wanting to gain basic information about Patti Smith and her band. Readers who would like to learn more about her, and in particular about crucial periods of her creative life, should also read some of the other available books about Patti Smith, such as her autobiography *Just Kids*.

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Gillian G. Gaar
Entertain Us: The Rise of Nirvana
London: Jawbone, 2012

A large number of books about Nirvana and the grunge movement in general have been written over the years. Most of them, however, provide just an overview of the band's entire career, with many also focusing on Kurt Cobain's personal issues. Gillian G. Gaar's book *Entertain Us: The Rise of Nirvana* is different.

As the title of the book suggests, it focuses on the important moments and events in the band's early years which led to the success of their second album *Nevermind* in 1991. *Entertain Us: the Rise of Nirvana* tells the story of Nirvana from the point of view of the insider, as Gaar was there from the very beginning of the grunge movement. She contributed to the magazines (*Rolling Stone*, *Mojo*, *The Rocket* and many others) that wrote about the bands, knew their members and had the insight – the key factors for writing a valuable book on an important band or era in the history of music.

Based largely on interviews with personalities whose participation in the development of both Nirvana and the grunge movement was essential (the interviews were taken from magazine articles and other publications), Gaar's book centers not only on the rise of Nirvana but also on the rise of the entire Seattle Scene. It stresses the importance of punk and its influence on the alternative music scene, but at the same time does not forget to mention other bands – like Black Flag, Hüsker Dü, or the Melvins – which paved the way for Nirvana's and other grunge bands' subsequent success.

As has already been mentioned, the book contains many quotes from people who were in one way or the other part of the grunge movement; be it members of the bands, producers, managers, concert-goers, or just fans. As a result, readers have a chance to hear from personalities like Danny Goldberg (artist manager), Craig Montgomery (sound engineer), Jack Endino (musician/producer), Butch Vig (*Nevermind* producer), Charles Peterson (photographer), Earnie Bailey (Nirvana's guitar technician), Kurt Danielson (TAD bassist), Chad Channing (ex-Nirvana drummer), and many others. The inclusion of their voices helps recreate the atmosphere of the time when the Nirvana hysteria was just about to break out.

However, the greatest contribution of the book, and the one that the hardcore Nirvana fans (because they seem to be the target readers) will surely appreciate most, is that it contains in-depth analyses of every Nirvana song and its development up to *Nevermind*, as well as comments on the particular song by the members of the band. This helps the readers understand the process of songwriting and also deepens their knowledge of the origin of the songs.

What is more, the book also provides information about all Nirvana's important studio sessions as well as their radio and TV appearances. It also includes the significant live performances of the band – from the first ever performance at a house party in 1987, through the Off Ramp Café show in November 1990, to the first public performance of Nirvana's biggest hit "Smells Like Teen Spirit" at the OK Hotel in April 1991. Although there are apparently some inaccuracies in the exact dates of the shows or particular takes of the songs (the book's contents have been discussed on *livenirvana* – a website dedicated to

Nirvana that contains a detailed tour and session history of the band as well as discussion forums), the book is highly informative.

Gillian G. Gaar's book *Entertain Us: The Rise of Nirvana* is probably not an essential book if one wants to acquire basic information about Nirvana. In such a case one should read Michael Azerrad's *Come as You Are: the Story of Nirvana* (1993) or Everett True's *Nirvana: the True Story* (2006). However, Gaar's book can be regarded as an in-depth early Nirvana documentary (she was a project consultant/liner note writer for Nirvana's box set *With The Lights Out* and thus can be considered an authority on the topic) of high quality and value.

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The review is an outcome of the Student Grant Competition: SGS2/FF/2012, "Song in Cultural Contexts / Píseň v kulturních kontextech".