



Far from the Madding Gerund: And Other Dispatches from Language Log

Mark Liberman , Geoffrey K. Pullum

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Mark Liberman and Geoffrey K. Pullum have collected some of their most insightful and amusing material from Language Log, their popular web site. Often irreverent and hilarious, these brief essays take on many sacred cows, showing us--among many things--why Strunk & White is useless, how the College Board can't identify sentence errors in the SAT, and what makes Dan Brown one of the worst prose stylists in the business.

There is plenty here to inspire deeper thoughts as well. Why do Pete Rose's statements fall short of saying "I'm sorry," and can we learn how to apologize by analyzing his mistakes? Is there such a thing as mind-reading fatigue? What is the meaning of "pluralism" and "Yankeehood"?

Language Log is a site where serious professional linguists go to have fun. There's plenty of fun and plenty to get you thinking about language in new ways in this collection.

Far from the Madding Gerund: And Other Dispatches from Language Log Details

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From Reader Review Far from the Madding Gerund: And Other Dispatches from Language Log for online ebook

Sally says

I love linguistics in the global sense; this is more an examination of the nuances of English. This is a good book, it's just really difficult to read for any length of time before your eyes glaze over and you begin to drool due to cerebral overload.

Mark Flowers says

Because I'm a total nerd, my favorite blog in the world is Language Log (<http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/>), a blog about language, linguistics, and related issues. This book is a compilation of posts by the two main bloggers for Language Log, Mark Liberman and Geoff Pullum. Their take on language is totally refreshing and descriptivist (none of that Eats, Shoots, and Leaves crap) and if you give them a little time it'll change your worldview not just on language but a whole host of socio-cultural issues.

Ben says

This book is just a collection of blog posts from Language Log. It is fun to read, but it's not going to give you any amazing new insight into, well, much of anything. If you're interested in the English language, this is good bathroom reading material. It deals with topics ranging from grammar to sociolinguistics to computational linguistics -- but it is all written on a very accessible level.

Spencer says

Interesting and entertaining, at least as a language geek. This is a collection of posts for the language log blog, so you can read them online and decide if you would want to read them in book form.

Robotbee says

I wrote a paper for a linguistics class on language change, focusing on the phenomenon of eggcorns. I bought myself this book, mostly so I could have an actual text for my bibliography (we could use only a limited number of non-text or online-journal sites, although she later gave me approval to use sources like unorthodox online dictionaries, given my topic), but I ended up enjoying it for its own sake.

If you are a supercilious grammar nerd who takes pleasure in other people's displays of ignorance, this book is for you.

If you are a scholar of linguistics with a genuine interest in the way language is changing, this book is also for you.

If you are me, this book is also for you.

Ivan Komarov says

This is a dead-tree version of the best posts from Language Log (I think it's called a blook), in which Mark Liberman and Geoff Pullum do a great job explaining linguistic intricacies to the unwashed masses. The subjects they write on range from computational linguistics and theoretical grammar to eggcorns and usage patterns of the notorious word "like" in young Americans' speech. Since LL is an informal blog written in an informal tone, the posts are not only enlightening, but amusing and entertaining as well. Geoff Pullum, in particular, is guilty of making me laugh uncontrollably and spill my tea while reading his bashing and mocking of renowned author Dan Brown. Well, I suppose Dan got what was coming to him, but the tea was extremely hot, and it hurt. Damn Pullum and his hilarious writing.

Unfortunately, things are not all peachy. As for the book's layout, I have two major complaints.

First, a situation that happened more than once in the course of reading: In the very beginning of a post I stumble upon something like "In yesterday's post, I wrote something about Foobars. Today, I want to elaborate on what I had said." Naturally, I want to know more about this Foobar business, so I follow the reference to the "yesterday's post"—only to find out that in order to get there I have to flip through a hundred pages, and maybe then some, if the author feels like he wants to say more about Foobars. This is an abomination. A book is not a web browser; I don't have multiple tabs to load everything I need in the background. Truth to be told, I don't have any tabs at all. I want to read linearly, not to jump frantically from page to page.

Second, retyping long URLs from the text is bothersome (and are there long URLs in the text!). The publisher could have—and should have—used a url shortner, such as <http://bit.ly>, <http://tr.im>, or <http://j.mp>.

If it wasn't for these distractions, I'd give the book a 4. I don't know if they are going to be fixed in the next edition and even if there will be a next edition, so, for now, *The Madding Gerund* will have to make do with a measly 3.

Nat says

This is a collection of posts from the language log blog, run by a bunch of linguists who are advocates of the value of linguistics in general education, unrelenting critics of those who make up or misrepresent linguistic "facts", and opponents of linguistic prescriptivists (like David Foster Wallace). The authors display frightening erudition and their care for accurate representations of the way things are is inspiring.

Jonathan says

The best language log blog posts. Very funny and illuminating. I gave this to my Mom and she really liked it.

Ron says

For anyone that enjoys reading about Language, this book contains a series of entries from the Language Log blog: <http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/langua....> The book ends on a high note, criticizing the writing ability of Dan Brown, author of The DaVinci Code. I had a similar feeling reading Dan's books, and enjoyed reading my thoughts on paper written by another person.

This is one of my favorite books I have ever read. However, if I had found the Language Log blog earlier, I wouldn't have needed to read the book. But I feel that I have caught up by reading this.

Kate says

Good in small doses. I enjoyed contemplating what constitutes "proper" use of language, and possibly having something to back up some of my suspicions, but after a while it's just one rant after another.

Jenn says

slowly, slowly working my way through the posts from the Language Log

Weirleader says

Don't remember when, exactly, I read this, but it's a lot of fun for somebody who enjoys discussions of grammar and word usage. If that sounds geeky, well... sorry. I've always enjoyed discussions about language. It amounts to a bunch of collected blog posts, organized thematically. So it's easy to dip into for a bit when you have time -- no long, deep reading required.
