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Alphabet Juice: The Energies, Gists, and Spirits of Letters, Words, and Combinations Thereof; Their Roots, Bones, Innards, Piths, Pips, and Secret Parts, ... With Examples of Their Usage Foul and Savory

Roy Blount Jr.

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Ali G: *How many words does you know?*

Noam Chomsky: *Normally, humans, by maturity, have tens of thousands of them.*

Ali G: *What is some of 'em?*
—Da Ali G Show

Did you know that both *mammal* and *matter* derive from baby talk? Have you noticed how *wince* makes you wince? Ever wonder why so many h-words have to do with breath?

Roy Blount Jr. certainly has, and after forty years of making a living using words in every medium, print or electronic, except greeting cards, he still can't get over his ABCs. In *Alphabet Juice*, he celebrates the electricity, the juju, the sonic and kinetic energies, of letters and their combinations. Blount does not prescribe proper English. The franchise he claims is "over the counter."

Three and a half centuries ago, Thomas Blount produced *Blount's Glossographia*, the first dictionary to explore derivations of English words. *This* Blount's Glossographia takes that pursuit to other levels, from Proto-Indo-European roots to your epiglottis. It rejects the standard linguistic notion that the connection between words and their meanings is "arbitrary." Even the word *arbitrary* is shown to be no more arbitrary, at its root, than *go-to guy* or *crackerjack*. From sources as venerable as the *OED* (in which Blount finds an inconsistency, at *whisk*) and as fresh as Urbandictionary.com (to which Blount has contributed the number-one definition of "alligator arm"), and especially from the author's own wide-ranging experience, *Alphabet Juice* derives an organic take on language that is unlike, and more fun than, any other.

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