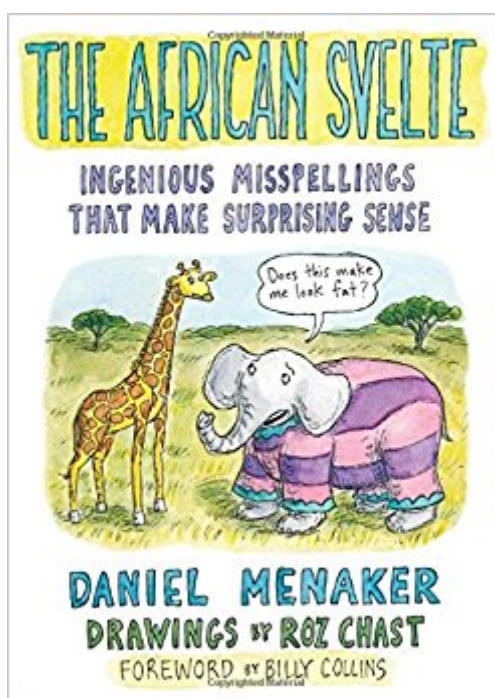


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# The African Svelte: Ingenious Misspellings That Make Surprising Sense



## Synopsis

Inspired by his tenure at *The New Yorker*, this collection of comical, revelatory errors foraged from the wilds of everyday English comes with commentary by the author, illustrations by Roz Chast, and a foreword from Billy Collins. During his time at *The New Yorker*, Daniel Menaker happened across a superb spelling mistake: "The zebras were grazing on the African svelte." Fascinated by the idea of unintentionally meaningful spelling errors, he began to see that these gaffes "neither typos nor auto-corrects" are sometimes more interesting than their straight-laced counterparts. Through examples he has collected over the course of his decades-long career as an editor and writer, he brings us to a new understanding of language--how it's used, what it means, and what fun it can be. Illustrated by the inimitable Roz Chast, with a foreword from former poet laureate Billy Collins, *The African Svelte* offers thoughtful and intelligent exit Jesus. Menaker glances at familiar fumbles like "for all intensive purposes" and "doggy-dog world," but readers delighted by language will find themselves turning the pages with baited breath to discover fresh howlers that have them laughing off their dairy airs.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A clever book... Leavened by famously jittery drawings from Roz Chast, *The African Svelte* cleverly educes the "literally poetic justice" of "eeking out a living" or disguising your terrorist intent by "wearing a baklava." "The Washington Post" "For language lovers, this book, with all its verbal tangles and wit, is sure to, in its own words, pass mustard." "Poets & Writers" "The African Svelte is a whole new comedy of errors. I like to split

my bridges." "Roy Blount, Jr., author of *Save Room for Pie* and many others "Haul out the chaise lounge. Daniel Menaker has defied the spell checker tenaciously and redeemed the misspelled word with playful acuity. The department of corrections will never be the same. Paddy O'Furniture forever." "Mary Norris, author of *Between You and Me* "Call them eggcorns, malaprops, or 'sveltes' " for Daniel Menaker, those happy accidents are the occasions for witty excursions down linguistic roads not taken. He had me from the gecko." "Geoff Nunberg, author of *Going Nuclear* and language commentator, NPR "Fresh Air" "I've made a lot of missteaks, but none of them have been as smart or as funny as the ones in this book." "Patricia Marx, author of *Let's Be Less Stupid*

DANIEL MENAKER began his career as a fact checker at *The New Yorker*, where he became an editor and worked for twenty-six years. A former book editor, Menaker is the author of six books; he has written for *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *Parents*, *Redbook*, and many others. ROZ CHAST was born in Brooklyn, New York. Her cartoons began appearing in *The New Yorker* in 1978. Since then she has published hundreds of cartoons and written or illustrated more than a dozen books. Her memoir *Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?* was a #1 *New York Times* bestseller and a 2014 National Book Award Finalist.

I always have high hopes for anything Roz Chast, but this book was a disappointment. Her drawings, of course, are wonderful, but there aren't that many of them. Skimming through the entries, there are definitely some droll malaprops, but I'm guessing that unless you are an English major, you may find that the author gives you way more info about these mispronounced words and their etymologies than you every imagined needing or wanting. The most humorous part of the book to me was Mr. Menaker's elementary school story about Columbus' ships recollection (it made me laugh out loud) and his subsequent *New Yorker* submission at an early age of said story. He is obviously fascinated by the parallels between the real words' origins and the mispronunciations, but goes into way too much detail throughout the book IMHO.

Very humorous misspellings of words that give a completely different meaning to the term. One of my favorites is a reviewer who wrote of an attractive young lady that she had a marvelous "dairy air". (derriere).

I love words in general, and puns in particular, so I looked forward to this book when a like-minded

friend recommended it. I spent two or three hours reading parts of it and laughing. I enjoyed interrupting my husband with puns and mistakes. Some of them will stick with us and be incorporated into our patter such as: a pillow of strength, a pillow of the community, doggie dog world, and dairy air are our favorites. However, one should be a real wordsmith to read this book thoroughly.

What a fun book. I was laughing out loud. I'm a reader from way back, so the misspellings were even more fun because of the references. This is my second copy. I'm passing them along.

This goes on the shelf with my other books to dip into for fun. Not a 'sit down and read straight through' book necessarily, but that works too.

It was a little strong on the technicalities of the English language, and the etymology of words, but on the whole, lots of fun. I got a chuckle out of "self of steam" for self esteem--many were like that.

A very clever and good read. Good for anyone who loves words.

Witty and funny! I laughed all the way through. If you love language, the bungling thereof, and just knowing where words come from, this book is an enjoyable and informative read. And let's not forget the inimitable Ms Chast! You rock, Roz!

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