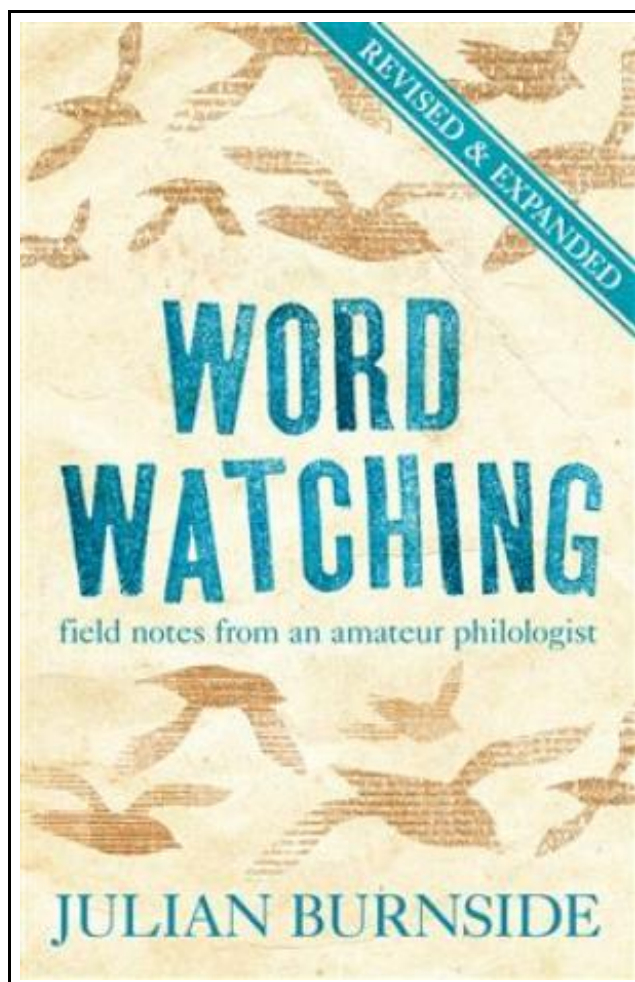


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Scribe Publications, 2009. Paperback. Book Condition: New. 2. 13.2 x 19.7 cm. A bonzer discussion of the strange pedigree of the naughty, nice, and, sometimes, obscene English language. We live in a torrent of words ? from radio and television, books and newspapers, and now from the Internet. But, as Julian Burnside reminds us in this witty and erudite collection, words are a source of both pleasure and power, and can be deployed for good or for ill. Some of these essays explore curiosities in odd corners of the language simply to remind us of the extraordinary richness of the English language: we learn, for example, that the word 'pedigree' refers to the shape of a stork's foot, and that 'halcyon' recalls an early Greek love story. Other pieces use small matters of language to illustrate larger processes of cultural borrowing and change. Burnside's musings remind us that we should not be alarmed at the instability of the language; rather, we should see its wanton borrowings as a source of strength and vitality. Wordwatching also reminds us of the need to be aware of the misuse of language in the service of sinister purposes ? whether political, ideological, social, or personal. An ear well tuned to the nuances of vocabulary inoculates the hearer against this epidemic of deception. Containing 56 delightful essays dealing with subjects as diverse as deadlines, fancy words, the problems with 'issue', odd sounds, the delicate etymology of 'tawdry', and the fallacy of 'wading in', Wordwatching is a fascinating demonstration of the power and the pleasure of the English language. Paperback.

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