

BOOK REVIEW: SCHOTTENFREUDE

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Fußfaust.

Ebenmäßigkeitentzückung.

Gaststättenneueröffnungsuntergangsgewissheit.

These are just three of the 120 faux German words which celebrated miscellanist Ben Schott has dreamed up for his latest volume, *Schottenfreude: German Words for the Human Condition*. Schott may not be the first to pen an entire dictionary of imaginary words—Douglas Adams famously did it thirty years ago with *The Meaning of Liff*—but in *Schottenfreude* he has raised the genre to a lexicographic and typographic art form. Each lavishly typeset spread of this elegant little book features three fanciful German compounds, along with their respective pronunciations, etymologies, and invented definitions. The facing page contains a wealth of lexicographic annotations, each meticulously referenced and elucidated with up to thirteen levels of footnotes.

Schott has a knack for coming up with genuinely useful coinages—who among us has not experienced *Mahlneid* (coveting your dining partner’s restaurant order), *Traumneustartversuch* (attempting to resume a dream after being roused), *Vernissageversuchung* (the urge to (dis)prove a “wet paint” sign), or *Kühlschrankblockade* (staring hungrily but irresolutely at your open refrigerator)? In a few very rare cases Schott proposes a sesquipedalian teutonym where a perfectly serviceable English term already exists—there’s no pressing need for *Pissoirzurückhaltung* when we already have *paruresis*, nor *Schwiegermutterkurvenlanghals* when *rubbernecking* will do. However, the clever macaronic punning and insightful commentary more than make up for this occasional superfluity.

Schottenfreude is simply *wunderbar*, and would make an excellent addition to the library of any logophile, trivia buff, or lover of fine typesetting.

Schottenfreude: German Words for the Human Condition by Ben Schott
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