UNMUFLING THE 'MUFFFFFFELE

Living Usage and Laggard Lexicalisation

It is only once or twice in a lifetime that an individual may decide to buy himself an encyclopaedic dictionary. Whether unilingual or bilingual, the purchase of a lexicon is (punning unintentional) a weighty matter to consider, and guidance will invariably be sought from someone who is looked upon as an insider. However, a bookseller, with such an interesting customer in sight, will probably be more than ready to claim the virtues of precision and all-inclusiveness for the volume or volumes on the desk before him. Moreover, the pamphlets, brochures and other advertising matter brought out by a publisher cannot be expected to be less biased either, and prospective customers will find themselves waylaid by phrases like "with this dictionary we have reached the limits of lexicographical up-to-dateness."

Impartiality, then, is very rare indeed, and it is a wholesome corrective to remember Samuel Johnson's sober warning that "dictionaries are like watches, [none of which] can be expected to go quite true." Yet, against the background of the mass and the magnitude of sins committed nowadays as in the past, this statement is litotic almost in the extreme. Consider the following two entries from
Kra'wat-tenmuf-fel m colloq. person who wears always the same tie.

The two entries are a sad example of how much can go wrong in a little space. However briefly, Homer must have nodded deeply in his dictionary office, giving lexical imps the chance to work sundry mischief. In line one, there is a bleak and sprawling definition where one would expect a vivid and succinct colloquialism to match the one in the source language. What is offered, moreover, both fails to do justice to connotational values and only partially covers the denotational meaning, because Krawattenmuffel also stands for a 'person who never wears a tie'. (One hesitates to put forward such dry definitions in view of the emotional nuances attached to the word.) Also, the reference marker cf., in line six, is completely out of place; anyone heeding the directions for use on p. xxx will be led to believe that the compound "is identical in meaning" with the simple noun and should be considered "the more frequently used term" - but this cannot possibly be the case.

These, in sum, are rather grievous errors of omission and commission, and may perhaps be better understood in the light of the internal history of Langenscheidt's dictionary. To an external observer, though, it is the growth of the German language in the past few decades that will, on closer inspection, suggest the presence of extenuating circumstances. Before the late sixties, Muffel, as a non-tech-
nical colloquialism, stood for 'a low-spirited and, hence, grumpy person', a meaning which it has fully retained to this day.¹ In the basic sense, then, of 'one who pouts or grumbles', Muffel is recorded in nearly all the major unilingual German dictionaries. Here are a few. GERHARD WAHRIG's *Das Große deutsche Wörterbuch* (Gütersloh, 1967) speaks of a "mürrischer Mensch"; LUTZ MACKENSEN, both in his *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Munich, ⁵ 1967) and in *Der tägli­che Wortschatz* (Stuttgart, ⁵ 1970), defines the word as 'Murrkopf'; while RUTH KLAPPENBACH and WOLFGANG STEINITZ, *Wörterbuch der deutschen Gegenwartssprache* (Berlin, 1975), equate it with 'muffliger Mensch', i.e. one who is 'mürrisch, unfreundlich, wortkarg'.

Up to this point there is no lexicographical record of an extension of meaning. Surely, if Langenscheidt banked its editorial work on bulky secondary sources like these (which it quite possibly did), it is not surprising that the yield should have been so poor. After all, the semantic change became public knowledge only with the appearance of Duden's *Das Große Wörterbuch der deutschen Spra­che*, whose Volume 4, in 1978, already differentiated rather neatly, if somewhat simplistically:

* Muffel ... 1. (ugs.) a) mürrischer, unfreundlicher Mensch:
  du bist einfach ein schrecklicher M.; b) jmd., der einem bestimmten Trend, einer bestimmten Sache gleichgültig, desinteressiert gegenübersteht, sich nicht darum kümmert;
  vgl. ~muffel. 2. [...] 

¹ As to its origins, kinetics (or body language) will provide the an­
swer. Irritation can be expressed, as everybody knows, by pushing the
lips forward in inarticulate protest and releasing a guttural breath of
air, whose articulate realisation may well be the sound sequence
[muf]. And indeed, this expletive took on concrete shape as a lexeme;
it has been documented as a verb, maffen 'pout', since Middle High
German times, and from its more recent variant, muffsIn, the agent
noun was formed by subtraction.

Indeed, the change was hardly an abrupt one. No evidence is needed to picture scores of situations, over a number of decades, in which Muffel, along with many others of the same negative semantic ilk, such as Dickschädel, Fadian, Starrkopf and Spielverderber, could have been used to express appreciation or cajolment by negation. Minus multiplied by minus gives plus; and, in language, "he is not bad" is a positive statement. A phrase of persuasion, too, like sei doch kein Muffel und komm mit zur Party (Duden 10 [Mannheim, 1970]) sounds perfectly natural and would, in fact, be timeless if the occurrence of modGer. Party were not to impose a certain limitation a quo. With just as much ease, then, a speaker might have replied, in real or in mock defiance, und ich bin ein Partymuffel und geh nicht hin - and the compound word Partymuffel would have been born on the spur of the moment. Was it in the sixties, the fifties, or even before the War? Was it once, twice, or was it a hundred times? It is as idle to speculate on the date or place of origin as it is easy to imagine that such coinage originated with some lively speaker of German in a humorous, ironic, slightly irritated, or other similar mood, an unconsciously long period ago. All we know now is that Partymuffel does exist today, in the minds and mouths of hundreds of thousands of speakers.

The antenatal stage, as it were, of Partymuffel may thus have been the co-existence of its two elements in a compound sentence, such as the resigned *er ist halt ein Muffel und kommt nicht zu meiner Party, with subsequent fusion of the elements. Though this assumption suggests the most natural preparatory stage of compounding, it is also plau-
sible that fusion took place *ad hoc.* Changing the example, this might readily have been the case with *Morgenmuffel,* possibly coined for the first time by an indignant wife who had to deal with a spouse still morosely drunk with sleep: *so ein Muffel!* > *so ein Morgenmuffel!*

The word *Muffel,* in all its combinations, enjoys a growing popularity in spoken German. At the same time, it is spreading to varieties of German which do not have a direct connection with dialect or colloquialisms, as for example the language of the mass media. Not only the onomatopoetic quality of the word, but also the trends of fashion or new fads seem to be responsible for the rapid spread of the term.

Above and beyond all this, the expression apparently fills a semantic slot in the word field of invective. In contrast to other current swear-words, it carries connotations of a gentler, more sympathetic form of criticism. When one person calls another a *Muffel,* he clearly airs his discontent with a particular weakness or fault, but at the same time he indicates that the weakness does not spoil his appreciation of the person's value as a whole. Thus the criticism is not meant to expose or ridicule, and is in no way detrimental to the warmth of an existing relationship. Contempt, as specified in the Langenscheidt entry, is certainly not the right label to use.

The aspect of gentle criticism can be observed in most uses of our term. For instance, a mother, when having a group of friends over for afternoon tea, may say of her
sixteen-year-old son, "Mein Sohn Hans ist ein richtiger Bü-
chermuffel: die ganze Zeit hängt er nur auf dem Sportplatz
herum" ("My son Jack is a regular book-hater; he does noth-
ing but hang around the sports field all day"). Such an ob-
servation has a completely different ring from the one a
similarly disillusioned head teacher might make about Jack,
"Also der Hans, den kommt das Lesen schon ganz schwer an —
der hat nur den Fußball im Kopf, und ein Buch ist ihm ein
Fremdkörper!" ("Why, Jack's practically illiterate; he
wouldn't recognize a book if he saw one — the only thing he
ever thinks about is football!"). Or a woman may reply to a
friend's query whether she has seen the latest hit play,
"Ach, du weißt ja, mein Mann ist ein ziemlicher Theatermuf-
fel, den bringst du kaum von seinem Fernseher weg" ("Well,
you know, my husband never was much of a theatre bug: it's
hard to tear him away from his T.V."). The criticism con-
tained in such a remark is far more gentle than if she had
said, "Dazu ist mein Mann viel zu uninteressiert; alles,
was nicht das Fernsehen bringt, geht über seinen geistigen
Horizont" ("My husband is far too dull for things like
that; television is about the limit of his intellectual
capacity").

As these two examples may help to illustrate, the word
Muffel conveys affectionate criticism, implying in fact
that the speaker values the person despite his little
faults. The term, therefore, also lends itself to ironic
self-criticism, although this is presumably more often the
case in writing than in speech. In a letter, for instance,
we might well find the following, "Meine beiden Jungen be-
drängen mich schon seit Wochen, daß ich einmal mit ihnen
to einem Fußballspiel gehe; an diesem Wochenende wird es
aber wahrscheinlich wieder nichts werden, da ich ja ein
ziemlicher Sportmuffel bin" ("My two boys have been pes-
tering me for weeks to go to a football game with them; but it doesn't look like I'll make it this weekend either, I'm not much of a sports fan'). In this example, too, the speaker is indicating that he knows his own, perhaps regrettable, lack of enthusiasm, but does not take it too seriously.

In addition to the function of the word Muffel as a form of gentle criticism, there is a further semantic category filled by the term. It expresses the complete indifference of the speaker to a particular object, mode of behaviour, or event for, after all, a Muffel is never violently opposed to the object of his criticism. Again, an illustration is easy to find. The famous German Automuffel takes no pleasure in driving and, whenever possible, avoids it. This does not mean that he is against cars, or that he has ideological reservations about driving and traffic, nor is he an ecological "freak"; on the contrary, campaigns against cars and driving leave him completely cold. It is simply that automobiles do not interest him in the least. Such a situation can be summed up most concisely by our word Muffel, and no other one at present can truly take its place.

This is also why the mass media call upon the newcomer so frequently. Journalism, more than any other field, has a preference for brevity and impact. Precisely these qualities account for the growing popularity of the word Muffel in individual colloquial speech. Used as the root word of a compound, an almost infinite variety of combinations is possible. The exact meaning of such a compound, however, can only be inferred from the context, since the situation may vary.

Thus, spawning Muffel words is not merely a fad, or phonetic fun. The act of creation fulfils a unique semantic function - the expression of indifference, or of gentle
criticism, at times directed against oneself. And the lingual proliferation of the Muffel is a prime example of how flexible the German language is after all, and how fast it develops to fill lexical gaps.

Any lexicographer trying to accord the Muffel family their long overdue dictionary status will, of course, also very soon become aware of the fact that the compound element is by nature a cyclothyme: it is, in human terms, extremely gregarious and semantically fickle. In fact, there is now in evidence a teeming progeny of Muffel formations not even a specialist can possibly hope to survey. A good many of them look like spontaneous creations; others have already shown themselves to be ephemera. And as to the query whether the very large remainder of them will attain a respectable age, the lexicographer's task would require the powers of a clairvoyant, a calling that is as dubious as it is unacademic.

However, this is only one horn of the dilemma. Once a compound formation has been short-listed for lexicalisation, its semantic instability may yet present another crux. Does the compound the editor has before him simply denote the grumbler *per se*, a man whose unspecific moodiness - as those around him will ask - may be of the passing or of the more enduring kind? Or is the person referred to a hypothetical, though sometimes genuinely existent, individual whom the advertising world (not without unselfish reasons) likes to hold up as an unlovable prototype? Or again, is he rather a person of distinctly developed idiosyncracies, whose dislikes are firmly ingrained, or indeed blunted to indifference?
Quite often it is a case of one, or both, or even more. The polysemy in question, though vexing or embarrassing for anybody but the speaker or writer himself, should be accepted as a challenge to be dealt with as best as possible; in point of fact, given the proper setting, few compound occurrences will remain ambiguous. In the absence of any broader context, however, the simultaneous interpreter is not to be envied when he has to produce the English counterpart of a combination like Proseßmuffel, glossed without any semantic clues as "gemeinsprachig und zeitlos" in a short article by a noted German linguist. Your guess, I presume, is as good as mine. After all, we might as well concede with smiling resignation, most any other Muffel child is sired by a versatile, original and often headstrong personality who wills his offspring to mean just that and no otherwise. Only rarely are we supplied with an explanation that removes all doubts. So, as a case in point, we are grateful to learn that the "Verkehrsmuffel unserer Zeit", in the eyes of a sometime Mayor of the City of Hamburg, is an owner-driver who "zweimal täglich die Straße verstopft, die Stadtluft mit Lärm erfüllt und mit Gift anreichert, nur um mit seinem Fahrzeug 8 bis 10 Stunden lang einen Parkplatz zu blockieren." Without Mr. Mayor's specific guide-line, the listener or reader might see himself confronted with a bewildering number of ways to choose from, one of them for instance equating Verkehrsmuffel with the Automuffel mentioned before.

Both dangers, unpredictable gregariousness and semantic instability, may assail our dictionary-maker any time; and

3 Der Trierische Volksfreund, October 20, 1971, as quoted by KANN, p. 70.
it is advisable, with such contingencies in mind, to prepare a platform from which the reader may obtain his bearings. As seen below, this can be done by giving -muffel an entry of its own, and by differentiating between its possible senses: as a result the -muffel compound that waits to be identified will fall much less erringly into its appropriate slot.

As practised in a similar contribution to last year's annual, 4 it has been thought expedient to define the lexeme first and only then, after a colon, to explore the possibilities of rendering it on its home level of colloquiality:

Muffel m -e/- colloq. [the word conveys the speaker's disapproval or a shrug-of-the-shoulder kind of regret, and never implies great anger]
1. morose person, whose bad mood may be temporary or permanent:
grouch, misery-guts; wie kann man nur so einen ~ heiraten? how on earth could anyone marry such a grumpy old thing (or sausage, or so-and-so)? 2. person who will not, or is at least reluctant to, accept new things or fresh ideas: stick-in-the-mud; sei kein ~ und mach mit! come along and don't be such an old stick-in-the-mud.

-muffel1 m -e/- colloq. [in some rare instances of composition, the basic element has the sense of the uncompounded word, sense 1, but in addition, connotes that the bad mood shown on the occasion stated, as verbalised by the first component element, is ingrained] ~ e.g. Morgenmuffel.

-muffel2 m -e/- colloq., orig. tech. jargon [first used in advertising, but quickly generalised, as a gentle reprimand for one who

makes reluctant and, hence, sparing, or indeed no use at all, of a certain commodity] e.g. Krawattenmuffel.

-muffel\textsuperscript{3} m -s/- colloq., often in either sadly or cheerfully concessive irony (which may well be directed by the speaker against himself): person possessing an aversion or at least indifference to any activity or other feature in life that is accepted as a matter of fact by, and therefore offers no topic of discussion for, his fellowmen e.g. Bewegungsmuffel.

In conclusion, here is a handful of Muffel compounds that are of interest to linguists and may merit a place in a present-day encyclopaedic dictionary of German and English for one or more of the following reasons: (1) they are well-established and prolific; (2) they provide remarkable cultural indicators; and (3) they elicit various and distinctive ways in which the spoken English idiom can happily match the semantic content in German, easily and far beyond the point where the Langenscheidt entry has left its readers to fend for themselves:

\textbf{Bewegungsmuffel} m med. person unwilling to take much, or any, physical exercise; esp. one who loathes walks: old sluggard, lazybones, BE lump of idleness, lazy lump; \textit{du bist mir aber ein ~}! what a lazybones you are!, you seem to have forgotten the use of your legs!, AE you sure hate to stir your stumps!; meine Frau ist so ein ~, die meint, der kleinste Spaziergang bringt sie um my wife is such a lazy slob even the effort of taking a walk would probably kill her (or, ... just taking a walk would probably be the end of her).

\textbf{Bildungsmuffel} m educ. person possessing an aversion or indifference to the arts: cultural pleb (or slob), AE cultural dropout; \textit{er ist ein ~} culture really turns him off; mein Bruder ist ein derartiger ~, der schaut sich die Theater und Museen an liebsten nur von außen an my brother is a hopeless case (or, a lost cause) as far
as culture goes) (or, [you] just try getting my brother interested in culture) - he'd rather look at theatres and museums from the outside.

*Bremsermuffel, Bremsermuffel m mot. [a word orig. used in advertising] person who rarely has his or her car brakes checked for safety: *er ist ein - he is sloppy about his brakes.

*Büchermuffel m educ. person possessing an aversion or indifference to books: literary pleb (or philistine), book-hater; *er ist ein ~ (i) if averse to books: he is book-shy, he steers clear of books; (ii) if indifferent to books: he wouldn't know (what) a book (was) if you shoved it under his nose (or, in front of his face, or, down his throat).

*Dünnmuffel m med. person unconcerned about his or her weight problems: *die Männer sind meistens - most men couldn't (AE a. don't) care less about dieting; *mein Bruder ist ein ~ weight-watching just isn't my brother's line (or thing, or AE, bag), my brother is anything but a weight-watcher, nobody could call my brother a weight-watcher; *das Fasten ist für den - viel zu anstrengend going on a diet is too much like hard work for him.

*Fernschmuckel m telev. person who does not like watching television: member of the anti-TV league; *er ist so ein ~, der setzt (more colloq., hookt) sich bloß davor, wenn was ganz Besonderes kommt he just can't stand TV, there's got (or there has) to be something really special on before he'll sit (more colloq., plump, or plonk himself) down in front of the tube (BE the box, or the telly).

*Friseurmuffel m fash. person who hardly ever goes to the hairdresser: *solang ich den keime, läuft der - mit (ein und) demselben Haarschnitt herum he's been running around with the same (old) haircut (or, he hasn't been near a hairdresser) since the day I've known him, he hasn't set foot inside a barber shop for umpteen years.
Fußballmuffel m ftb. person who is not interested in football: football grouch; der (or das) ist so ein ~, der weiss bestimmmt nicht, wie's letzte Länderspiel ausgegangen ist he doesn't care two hoots (or he neither knows nor cares, or he doesn't know a thing) about football; I'll bet he couldn't tell you (BE he hasn't a clue) who won the last international game.

Gesundheitsmuffel m med. person who neglects his health, or who lives in an unhealthy manner: er ist ein ~ he doesn't care a straw (or doesn't give a damn) about his health; der alte ~ saft und friest, gerade was er will he doesn't give a moment's thought to his health (or his poor old body); he wolves or guzzles down everything that's put in front of him (or, he just keeps on stuffing himself and guzzling it down); sie raucht wie ein Schlot - mit so einem ~ wird es ein bitteres Ende nehmen she smokes like a chimney - she's digging her own grave (AE she's bound to hell in a basket).

Gurtmuffel m mot. [a word orig. used in advertising] person unwilling to put on a safety belt: safety-belt hater, AE safety-belt copout; er ist ein ~ he is allergic to safety belts; ich bin halt ein ~, das ist mir alles zu umständlich well, I don't wear safety belts - it's just too much of a hassle (or a fag); die ~ fliegen lieber (or eher) durch die Scheibe, als daß sie sich mal annehmen BE some people would rather fly through the windscreen before they learn to buckle (or strap) themselves in, AE some guys who won't wear a safety belt would rather go (or, take a flying leap) through the windshield than buckle up.

Handschuhmuffel m fash. person who believes it is too much trouble to wear gloves: member of the anti-glove league; geschieht ihm's schon ganz recht, dem ~, wenn er sich die Finger blau friert! serves him jolly well right! if he can't be bothered to wear gloves, it's not surprising his fingers go blue with cold (or, chilblains), ... anyone who doesn't have the sense to wear gloves deserves to freeze his fingers off.
Krawattenmuffel m fash. [a word orig. used as a publicity gag] 1. male person who never wears a tie: tie-hater; mein Mann ist ein ~ my husband has a thing against ties; mein Mann ist ein ausgesprochener ~ my husband wouldn't be seen dead in a tie. 2. male person who always wears the same tie: wearer of a life tie; er ist ein ~ he's stuck with that tie for life; he's been wearing the same tie for twenty years; the only tie he is willing to wear is Old Faithful; he's only got one tie in his wardrobe (AE his closet); he's ever faithful to his one and only tie; he can't bear to go anywhere without his one and only "favourite" tie; der alte ~ hat immer denselben Strick um den Hals he's got the same old rag around his neck, him and his tie are attached for life; der alte ~ lässt sich wahrscheinlich mit dem blöden Ding noch einmal eingraben I expect they'll bury him in that scruffy old tie of his.

Kulturmuffel m educ. = Bildungsmuffel.

Modernmuffel m fash. person who is blithely unconcerned about going with the latest trends in fashion: square; er ist ein ~ he doesn't know (or care) a thing about fashion; er ist ein ~, wie er im Buch steht he's such a square it's like he's (or, that he's probably) never heard anything about fashion.

Morgenmuffel m person habitually sulky and sleepy in the morning: morning grouch; ich bin ein ~ I'm allergic to mornings; ich bin halt ein ~, für mich braucht's das Aufstehen gar nicht zu geben well, I hate mornings, I wish they had never been invented; mein Mann ist ein derartiger ~, der weiß bis elf Uhr nicht, wie er heißt my husband is so dead till around eleven o'clock (in the morning) he couldn't tell you his name if you asked him.

Sexmuffel m person, usu. male, who takes little or no interest in sex: lousy (or rotten) lover; er ist ein ~ sex is the last thing on his mind, he hasn't discovered sex yet; mein Freund ist ein ~ my boyfriend is a lazy lover, my lover doesn't make love; ich möchte ja nicht sagen, daß sie ein ~ ist I wouldn't go the length of saying
that sex is the last thing on her mind (or, that she hasn't discovered sex yet); der ~ muß (du) erst gut zwei Stunden verführen, bevor was geht he [she] 's a slow one as far as sex is concerned; it takes a good two hours to get him [her] going (or warmed up); der alte ~ kann mehr mit einem Fernseher anfangen als mit einem Weib Old Droopy-drawers gets more of a kick from TV than from a roll in the hay; verlorene Liebesmüh mit so einem ~, laß es bleiben! forget it - wild horses couldn't drag him [her] into bed ; a hum. definition: ein Ochs ist ein Stier, der als ~ durchs Leben gehen muß an ox is a bull that has lost his interest in life (or, that no longer gets any fun out of life).

Tanzmuffel m enter. person who never cares to join in the dancing: self-willed (or self-appointed) wallflower, dance-hater; das ist ein ~, wie er im Buch steht he couldn't care less about dancing, he wouldn't be caught dead on a dance floor; mit dem würd' ich nicht ausgehen, dem ~ ist seine halbe Bier viel lieber als der flotteste Tango I wouldn't go out with that one, he couldn't bear to be separated from his glass of beer for the liveliest tango (or, he likes his glass of beer better than the most fun tango in the world).

Unweltmuffel m person who never troubles to think about the consequences of his, or of society's, offences against the cleanliness of the environment: chiefly AE pollution fiend on the loose; was, der kauft noch Einwegflaschen (more colloq. Wegwerfflaschen) - na, so ein ~! die Natur hat bei dem keine Chance what! he's still buying no-deposit (more colloq. throw-away) bottles! the (poor old) environment doesn't get a fair (or, much of a) chance with him around, does it (or, what chance has nature got with that kind of pollution-ist mentality)?

Volksfestmuffel m enter. person who does not like crowds and public entertainment fairs: carnival bore, country-fair bore; auch wenn du selber ein ~ bist, dann muß du doch wenigstens deine Kinder mal karussellfahren lassen even if you don't go much on fairs, you've got
to at least give the children the chance of a turn on the roundabout, AE even if folk festivals don't exactly grab you, at least you should take the kids for a ride on the roundabout.

Vorlesungsmuffel m educ. person who dislikes going to lectures: lecture-hater, AE lecture dropout; du bist mir vielleicht ein ~ ! du hast bestimmt noch keinen Hörsaal von innen gesehen I like that, cutting lectures left and right! I'll bet you've never seen the inside of an auditorium (or lecture room), ... you've never seen the inside of an auditorium (or lecture room), that's for sure.

Wahlmuffel m polit. person who neglects to vote: one who can't be bothered (or, who's too lazy) to vote \( \text{a psychological inducement} \) to vote: bist du ein ~ ? are you too busy to vote?, just no time to vote?

The -muffel, an extremely useful formative element, could never have been worked into lexicographical shape without the aid of many diligent helpers. Hans-Joachim Schmid, ably assisted by Angelika Eh hart, collected new combinations and discovered some important semantic aspects I might well have overlooked. At my request, the two not only supplied numerous headwords (which by themselves would fill pages) but also put these headwords through all their phrasal paces. To match the resulting little pageant of variety, it was a pleasure to have an equally resourceful Anglo-American team at one's side: Anna Buckett, B.A., M.A., M. Phil., and Dr. Jean Ritzke-Rutherford, B.A., both expert linguists and translators, revealed with almost effortless ease how rich the possibilities are in their native tongue when it comes to coping adequately with a new term and its practical applications. In this minor project of ours, as in major undertakings past and present, Frau Heidi Eidelloth was a paragon of perspicacity and neatness; she co-ordinated our work and marshalled lexemes with serene and kindly competence.

Although, alas, at a great distance from the scene of unmuffling the Muffel, Emeritus Professor Gerhard Graband, of Braunschweig Technical University, continues to supply our files with stacks of new cards, which are always a welcome addition. Moreover, his accompanying letters are a source of wisdom and inspiration for anyone engaged in cajoling the uncommitted spoken word into its dictionary harness without wishing to lose any, or much, of its pristine wealth of associations.
Povzetek

RAZMUFLIRANJE BESED MUFFEL ALI ZAPONELO SPREJEMANJE ŽIVE RABE V SLOVARJE

Pisec trdi, da celo večjim slovarjem ne uspeva beležiti nenehne sprememljivosti, raznolikosti in ustvarjalnosti pogovorne nemščine. V članku je omenjen in nadrobno obdelan en tak primer: nemško Muffel (po naše približno "godrnjač") in številne zveze, v katerih se more uporabljati. Mnoge pomenske tančine besede Muffel so bile doslej nespoznane; prezrti so bili tudi drobni razločki v odnosu do poimenovanega, ki se uresničujejo v različnih pogovornih položajih. Tako se da z Muffel - četudi je pravzaprav močno slabšalen - milo pograjati nekoga, ki smo mu naklonjeni.

Ta beseda pogovornega jezika ima dobro stran, da se lahko uporablja skoraj povsem, kot narekuje neposredno sobesedilo, prim. Automuffel, Büchermuffel. Nekatere take zloženke so enodnevne, druge se primejo in nazadnje dosežejo najvišjo čast, tj. sprejetje so v slovar.

Dodan je seznam nemških slovarskih enot z britanskimi in ameriškimi ustreznostmi. Iz njega je razvidno, da nudi angleščina bogato izbiro besedja, enakovrednega zloženkam z Muffel. Ker na pomen te besede bistveno vpliva m. dr. njeno sobesedilo, spreminjajo nekateri stavki, ki vsebujejo Muffel, pomen tega izraza na zanimiv in nov način, tako v nemščini kot v angleških prevodih.