

# Yes, Virginia, There Is a Good English-Latin Dictionary

by Thomas Fleming

Smith's English-Latin Dictionary  
by William Smith and  
Theophilus D. Hall  
Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci  
Publishers; 754 pp., \$79.95



**B**olchazy-Carducci is one of those little success stories that can happen “only in America.” Where else could a Latinist, who once studied for the priesthood, start a publishing firm devoted to putting out teaching aids for Latin teachers and end up with a catalogue that includes the most successful computer instruction series on Latin (*Artes Latinae*), a Latin version of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, and a popular classical journal—to say nothing of the best list of Slovak books in the United States? Browsing through their amazing catalogue (online at [www.bolchazy.com](http://www.bolchazy.com)) is a bit like taking a stroll through “The Old Curiosity Shoppe”: You never know what you are going to find. Many homeschoolers and schoolteachers have found their way to Bolchazy-Carducci. Many more should follow their example.

Several recent B-C productions are valuable additions to the professional or amateur classicist's library. Among a long list, I mention only two: a very useful CD by Waldo Sweet (creator of *Artes Latinae*); and *Words of Wisdom From the Ancients: 1000 Latin Proverbs*, a compendium of Latin *sententiae*, is not only a helpful collection of Roman wisdom and a useful aid to building Latin vocabulary, but a boon to the writer and editor who may occasionally forget the phrasing or source of a Latin tag. (B-C's *World Dictionary of Foreign Expressions* might be even more useful, though I have only had a chance to see, not to peruse, the volume.)

B-C also publishes collections of articles on a variety of ancient topics, such as the poetry of Vergil. *Rome and Her Monuments* contains helpful articles on Roman topography by Harry Evans and Hugh Lee as well as interesting observa-

tions on Roman literature by Jane Whitehead and Helen North and a variety of generally sensible explications of the Roman inheritance.

Perhaps the most important volume issued in the past year is a reprint of Smith's English-Latin Dictionary. (To be precise, this is a reprint of the 1871 American edition of Sir William Smith's and Theophilus Hall's *A Copious and Critical English-Latin Dictionary*.) Why is an English-Latin dictionary so valuable? The answer is simple. Speaking as a former teacher of Latin, I have to say that the most important—and most neglected—part of Latin instruction is writing in Latin. At the introductory level, this means that Latin vocabulary (indeed, the vocabulary of any foreign language) should be learned from English to Latin. Any fool, without a day's instruction, might guess that *aqua* means “water,” but only a Latin student, when asked the Latin word for water, can answer: “*aqua, aquae, feminine*.”

At higher levels, the problem becomes one of Latin composition, and since even good students cannot remember everything and are unlikely to know, for example, the words for (opening the book at random to pp. 340-41) “gizzard,” “glare,” “glass,” or “gleam,” he (more likely she, these days) needs to be able to consult a good English-Latin dictionary. Most Latinists would agree that such a book does not, in fact, exist, and that is why we have to fall back on Smith, which, for all its faults and slapdash criteria (some of which are pointed out in Dirk Sacre's useful introduction to this edition), is still the best thing going. In my previous life as a Latin teacher, I never actually owned a copy of Smith and had to use it in the library. Now, no first-year Latin teacher has an excuse for not owning it.

Recent additions to the B-C catalogue include a selection of Seneca's *Moral Epistles*, a bilingual edition of Francis Church's editorial “Yes, Virginia, There Is a Santa Claus,” a source guide to ancient Rome, and a volume entitled *The Unknown Socrates*, which provides *testimonia* (in translation) with comment from late antiquity on the life and teachings of Socrates. At *Chronicles*, we intend to do a better job of informing our readers of the books and resources that can help them to pursue a lifetime of self-education. In the meantime, they can either check out the online edition of the Bolchazy-Carducci catalogue or write to 1000 Brown St., Unit 101, Wauconda,

Illinois 60084.

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# The Realms of Gold

by Jeffrey Meyers

Gustav Klimt:  
Modernism in the Making  
edited by Colin Bailey  
New York: Harry Abrams;  
239 pp., \$60.00



**I**n Vienna, during the decade before the Great War, an astounding concentration of creative genius coincided with the final stages of political collapse. The work of Hofmannsthal, Musil, Broch, Schnitzler, Kraus, Werfel, and Zweig in literature; Mahler, Wolf, and Schönberg in music; Krafft-Ebing and Freud in psychology; Wittgenstein and Buber in philosophy; Schiele and Kokoschka in art: These suggested that Austria had achieved self-awareness at the very moment of dissolution. As Musil wrote: “Yes, maybe Kakania [Austria] was, despite much which speaks to the contrary, a country for geniuses; and probably that is another reason that it succumbed.”

Vienna represented a state of mind in a state of siege. As the monarchy tottered toward extinction, it desperately maintained the trappings of empire that emphasized social pretense and external appearances, elaborate titles and gradations of power. The traditional Austrian attitudes—sentimentality, nostalgia, light-hearted aestheticism, love of spectacle, fondness for the countryside, indifference to social reform, and passivity toward bureaucracy—mingled uneasily with more modern currents: the protests against censorship and rigid sexual conventions, the alienation of intellectuals and a high suicide rate, the nationalist and antisemitic movements. Karl Kraus ironically called Austria, with its quixotic mixture of repression and freedom, “an isolation cell in which one was allowed to scream.”

The most brilliant artist produced by this paradoxical background was Gustav Klimt (1862-1918). Like Freud, he tried

to free sexuality from the constraints of a normative culture and portrayed women engaging in lesbian love and erotic ecstasy. The son of a gold-engraver from a lower-middle-class suburb of Vienna, he had only an elementary-school education, but was well trained at the School of Applied Arts. Though he produced 230 paintings and 4,000 drawings, he was notoriously reluctant to speak about himself, his technique, or his art. He was mainly supported by wealthy Jewish patrons and became infatuated with the teenaged Alma Schindler, who later married Mahler, Gropius, and Werfel. Though deeply attached to his favorite model, Emilie Flöge, he fathered 14 children with various women.

This sumptuous catalogue (with 330 illustrations, including 190 in full color), prepared for an exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Ottawa, traces Klimt's astonishing stylistic transformation from a traditional 19th-century academic painter to a celebrator of unreality in the Keatsian "realms of gold." In 1923, a perceptive critic wrote that Klimt

is conceivable only in Vienna, better still in Budapest or Constantinople. His spirit is entirely Oriental. Eroticism plays a dominant role in his art, and his taste for women is rather Turkish. He is inspired by the decoration of Persian vases and oriental carpets, and especially delights in the gold and silver of his canvases.

The catalogue, after a brief introduction, presents essays by diverse hands on Klimt's conflict between tradition and modernism, his seismic reputation, his use of applied arts, his drawings, a complete description of the 36 paintings in the exhibition (which repeats information from the essays), and an extensive chronology and bibliography. Several of the essays, translated from the German academic style, are learned but rather heavy-going.

Klimt was the leader of the *fin-de-siècle* Secession movement—the Austrian equivalent of German *Jugendstil*, French *art nouveau*, and English Aestheticism. During the first decade of the 20th century, he produced an impressive, and often controversial, series of masterpieces. Commissioned by the University of Vienna to do an allegorical painting of Medicine, Klimt created a nude figure who seems to exalt in the public display

of her sexuality. The faculty fiercely condemned his work and "demanded that if the figure in question had to be female, then it should be clothed, or if it was unavoidable that it be naked, then it should be a male figure instead." After years of protracted argument, Klimt finally renounced the commission. His *Hostile Powers*, part of a Beethoven exhibition in 1902, featured a pot-bellied hermaphrodite based on Aubrey Beardsley's *Ali Baba* (1897). One clinically minded critic exclaimed:

Klimt has once again produced a work of art that calls for a doctor and two keepers. His frescoes would fit well in a psychiatric institute. The representation of "Lewdness" on the back wall is the last word in obscenity.

Klimt had seen the Byzantine mosaics in Venice and Ravenna and adopted their two-dimensional pattern of abstract ornamental forms. In *Goldfish (To My Critics)*, a woman seductively displays her swirling tresses and comely bottom against a flat metallic background of watery flowers and flowery waters. In *Water Serpents*, swooning subaqueous anorexics float in a trancelike state. His legacy to Viennese Expressionism was the emaciated woman with "protruding pelvis and rib cage, provocatively red hair and lips, long and slender legs."

In his portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer, the subject is imprisoned in the stiff Byzantine richness and sensuous serpentine swirls of a vibrant cloth of gold. In *Expectations*, an almond-eyed, highforeheaded, lacquered-haired, heavily banged beauty, with contorted Balinese hand gestures, hides, like a camouflaged animal, between a stiff brocaded gown and a vertiginous tapestry. As Baudelaire wrote of these dazzling *femmes fatales* in "*Sed Non Satiata*," in *Les Fleurs du mal*:

Her polished eyes are wrought of  
hypnotic minerals,  
And in that strange symbolic nature,  
In which unviolated angel and  
sphinx of old unite,  
Made all of gold and steel and light  
and diamonds.  
Forever glittering, like a useless  
star,  
Lies the frigid majesty of the sterile  
woman.

*Death and Life*, like so many of Klimt's works, contains the threat of morbidity and shows the skull beneath the skin. As Klimt wrote of *Hope I*: "Everything is ugly: she is, and what she sees—only within her is there beauty growing, hope. And her eyes say that." In his portrait of the nine-year-old Mäda Primavesi, the precocious child stands, in a white dress, against a lavender background. With legs apart, hand on hip, and a defiant gaze, she confronts the viewer with an unsettling mixture of engaging innocence and sexual sophistication.

*Judith II* portrays a stunningly beautiful, bare-breasted woman—head jutting forward with operatic intensity and bejeweled hands clutching at the rich brocade above the severed head of her victim. But Klimt's masterpiece, and most famous painting, is undoubtedly *The Kiss* (1908). The lovers' bare faces and hands protrude, as in a Byzantine icon, from a flat decorative envelope. The woman kneels, as in prayer, on a rich bed of flowers as strings of gold leaves trail from her golden cape. Like Hedda Gabler, she wears "vine leaves in her hair." The man gently turns her head sideways and kisses her cheek. The subtle arrangement of their four hands and the sensual outline of her body suggest an erotic swoon.

Scholars have suggested Egyptian, Byzantine, Turkish, Persian, Japanese, and Korean—as well as contemporary—influences on Klimt. But no one has mentioned the all-pervasive influence of Gustave Moreau. J.-K. Huysmans' precious description in *Against the Grain* (1884) of Moreau's *Salomé*—whom Klimt also painted—applies with equal force to the opulence of Klimt's art:

across her triumphal robe, sewn with pearls, patterned with silver, spangled with gold, the jeweled cuirass, of which every chain is a precious stone, seems to be ablaze with little snakes of fire, swarming over the matte flesh, over the tea-rose skin, like gorgeous insects with dazzling shards, mottled with carmine, spotted with pale yellow, speckled with steel blue, striped with peacock green.

Jeffrey Meyers, a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, has written about art in *Painting and the Novel* and *The Enemy: A Biography of Wyndham Lewis*.