



The Odes of Horace: A Facsimile

William Morris, Clive Wilmer, William Gladstone

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At the turn of the fifteenth century, private devotionals became a specialty of the renowned Ghent-Bruges illuminators. Wealthy patrons who commissioned work from these artists often spared no expense in the presentation of their personal prayer books, or 'books of hours', from detailed decoration to luxurious bindings and embroidery.

William Morris had a lifelong fascination with illuminated books. He collected thirteenth- and fourteenth-century manuscripts and became one of the foremost experts on the art of bookmaking and calligraphy. Aiming to resurrect a tradition that had fallen into abeyance with the invention of printing, he made eighteen illuminated books, using a variety of texts, during the course of his life. One of these, now held in the Bodleian Library, is a handmade edition of the Odes of Horace.

The pages of this book, reproduced here in high-quality facsimile, are among the most intricate and ambitious that Morris ever created. Using a Renaissance italic style of calligraphy, he illuminated letters with delicate shades of gold and silver, and adorned them with floral decoration and miniature faces and figures. The openings to each of the four books of the Odes are stunning display pages on which Morris collaborated with the artists Edward Burne-Jones and Charles Fairfax Murray.

The Roman poet Horace (65-8 BCE) wrote four books of lyric poetry in Latin which have subsequently been translated many times and have had an ongoing influence on Western literature. He combined descriptions of the everyday with the poetry of politics, patriotism, love and friendship, producing lines of beauty and wisdom which were very popular in Morris's day and continue to appeal in the twenty-first century.

This facsimile edition is presented in a blind embossed slipcase featuring a detail from one of Burne-Jones' paintings in the book with a companion volume containing an introduction to William Morris's manuscript and an English translation of the Odes.

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