



Blake: Prophet Against Empire (Dover Fine Art, History of Art)

David V. Erdman

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"An unsurpassed account of the historical background — literary, cultural, and intellectual as well as political and social—against which Blake worked and to which he responded as engraver, painter, and poet."
— *English Language Notes*.

For many years, William Blake was seen as a brilliant eccentric on the fringes of English literature and art. In the twentieth century, however, he came to be regarded as one of the greatest English poets and painters, one whose insights have profoundly influenced such thinkers as Nietzsche, Freud, and D. H. Lawrence.

In this volume, a leading Blake scholar shows how the political and social events and movements of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries influenced or inspired many of Blake's finest poems: "America," "Europe," "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," "The French Revolution," "Songs of Innocence and of Experience," "The Four Zoas," and numerous others. While Blake's poems can be read on many levels, this in-depth critical study demonstrates that much of the strange symbolism of this poetry represents a literary campaign against the political tyranny of the day.

For the third edition, David Erdman added much new material that came to light after the original publication of the book in 1954. Also included are over 30 illustrations, a Chronology, an Appendix of Additions and Revisions, and other materials. Written for students, scholars, and Blake specialists — anyone interested in the relationship of the poet's extraordinary symbolism and complex thought to the history of his own times — Erdman's meticulously documented study is the definitive treatment of this aspect of Blake's work and is unlikely to be superseded.

"For our sense of Blake in his own times we are indebted to David Erdman more than anyone else." — *Times Literary Supplement*.

Dover (1991) republication of the third (1977) edition of *Blake: Prophet Against Empire: A Poet's Interpretation of the History of His Own Times*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1954.

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