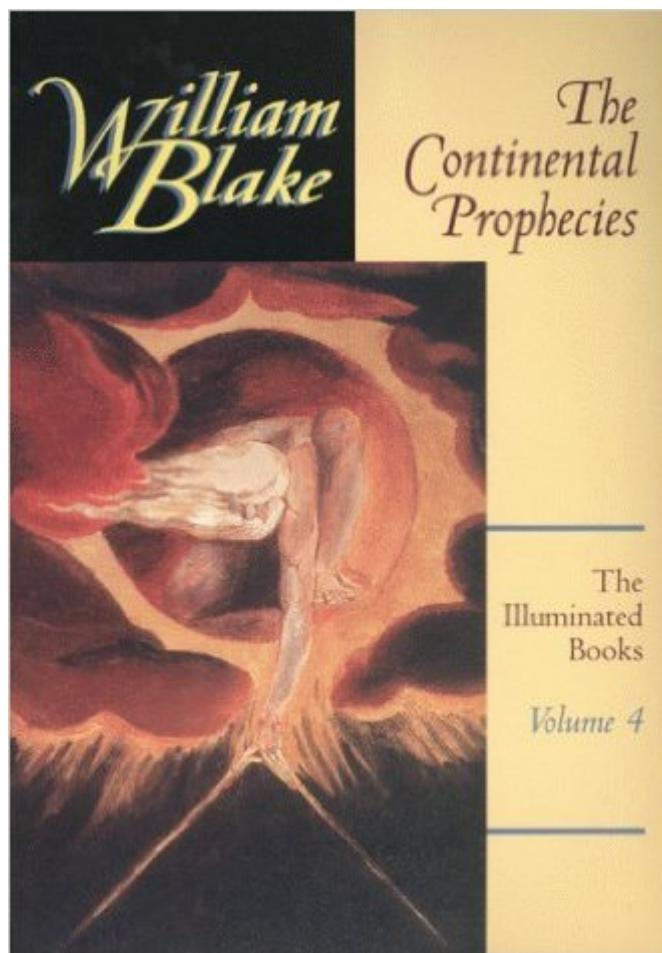


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The Continental Prophecies (The Illuminated Books Of William Blake, Volume 4)



Synopsis

The last volumes in the series of William Blake's Illuminated Books reveal the writer and artist as a prophet driven by a sense of apocalyptic urgency. Blake conceived and executed The Continental Prophecies and The Urizen Books in the early 1790s, capturing the intellectual and spiritual turmoil of the American and French revolutions. Here, for the first time, the general reader will encounter Blake's most intense vision in reproductions that do justice to the originals, accompanied by texts, comprehensive notes and commentaries, and detailed interpretations of the designs. The Continental Prophecies, which comprises "America," "Europe," and "The Song of Los," presents Blake's critical reckoning with the history of his own times. Marked by a particularly close integration of word and image, the books form a mythical plot from historical events and criticize the intricate structure of social oppression that the author attributes to organized state religion. Each of the three books attempts to point a way toward the process of millennial liberation. These volumes complete the six-part series of William Blake's Illuminated Books, including Jerusalem, Songs of Innocence and of Experience (now available in paperback), The Early Illuminated Books, and Milton, A Poem, all published by Princeton University Press.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Blake's work must be read in reproduction. An engraver by trade, Blake revolutionized book production with his "infernal method" of engraved illumination, hand-crafting each book. In the

Continental Prophesies, Blake revolutionizes historiography; *America*'s retelling of the American Revolution, for instance, juxtaposes Washington and Paine with Orc and Urizen, fact with myth, to produce something that powerfully transcends the dull round of history. The accompanying illuminations cannot be omitted-- they do not simply illustrate the text, but ILLUMINATE it, supplementing and counter-pointing. And Blake's art is awesome. The Blake Trust's series is superb, conveniently transcribing the handwritten text of the engraved text on the adjacent page, offering important visual variations between versions of the book, and amply providing comprehensive glosses (in separate sections, both interpretative and contextual) on each plate/page visually and textually. It is expensive to buy the entire series, but one MUST have Blake's illuminations, and Blake is an author for whom one needs all the notes one can get (Blake's allusions are extremely complex, so one must at least recognize them on the most basic level). One cannot say enough about the the visions of Blake presented in these books, but this is too much; you must SEE.

This wonderful volume contains what are referred to as Blake's Continental Prophecies. They are: "America", "Europe", and "The Song of Los". The last has two sections called "Africa" and "Asia" and is by far the shortest. They are all beautifully illustrated and the first plate in "Europe" is probably the most famous image from Blake's illuminated works - the bearded white man kneeling and reaching down out of the sun with the measuring compass. "The Song of Los" is also full of beautifully colored images. The "America" plates are monochrome although a couple of colored plates are shown in the supplementary plates. Since "America" has 18 plates and "Europe" 17 and "Los" 8, it follows that most of the volume's 367 pages are filled with commentary, notes, and supplementary material. This helps a lot because these prophecies are part of Blake's rather opaque personal mythology. Scholars have filled shelves with conjecture about what it all means and they do have some good notions, but it is tough sledding without the background material to ease the way. This is a great edition and will be a treasure on the bookshelf of all who love the works of William Blake.

I recommend that any fan of William Blake buy this volume and the other 5 in the series. The books are beautiful, large, and handsomely bound. Each book is reproduced in full color, using a six-color printing process rather than the standard four. The pages are heavy, opaque and have a gorgous lustre indicating very high quality paper. The text of each book accompanies the color reproductions in standard typeface with very competent commentary to boot. A must have!

Excellent

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