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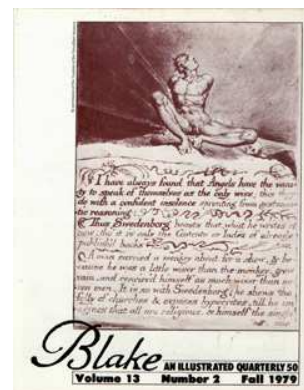
BLAKE

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Blake's Copy of Lavater's Aphorisms on Man: A Correction of G. E Bentley, Jr., Blake Books

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BLAKE'S COPY OF LAVATER'S APHORISMS ON MAN: A CORRECTION OF G. E. BENTLEY, JR., BLAKE BOOKS

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The history of Blake's annotated copy of J. C. Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man* (1788) provided by G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Books* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), invites correction of some minute particulars. Bentley describes three stages in the history of the book:

(1) Blake made his notes when the sheets were not bound and showed them "to Fuseli; who said one could assuredly read their writer's character in them";* (2) Acquired by Robert Hoe, who added his bookplate, and wrote a note now pasted in: "This copy which was Blake's, had to be rebound; it was in broken sheepskin, and more than dirty. All the writing by Blake on the [back] fly leaves is carefully preserved. R. H."; sold posthumously with Hoe's Library at Anderson Galleries, 25 April 1911, lot 396, for \$1,525 to (3) The HUNTINGTON LIBRARY.

*Gilchrist *Life of William Blake* (1863), i. 62. He also showed them to John Linnell, who transcribed them into a copy of the 1794 edition now in Yale.

Blake Books, p. 691; bracketed word and footnote in original

First of all, it was John Linnell Junior (seven years of age when Blake died in 1827) rather than his more famous father who transcribed with great care Blake's underlinings and notes into a second-hand copy of the third edition of *Aphorisms* (1794) now in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale.¹ In addition to the transcription John Linnell Junior wrote notes on the first and last endpapers of the book in which he identifies himself as the transcriber, dates the transcription 1874, and--most importantly--claims that Blake's copy of *Aphorisms* belonged to Samuel Palmer. The first endpaper reads: "John Linnell Junr . . . Blake's notes in the orig[inal]. edit[ion]. belonging to S. Palmer Esq[ui]re I have transcribed correctly in this edit[ion]. differences between this edit[ion]. & the orig[inal]. I mark in red ink--W. Blake's writing & marks are in black ink[.]" The note on the last endpaper contains substantially the same information, with the addition of "J L. junr (1874)."

Samuel Palmer's ownership of Blake's copy of *Aphorisms* prior to Robert Hoe is supported by A. H. Palmer's recollection of his father's library, written in Blake's copy of Boyd's Dante:

This volume as far back as I can remember, stood upon one of my father's [*i.e.*, Samuel Palmer's] book-shelves by the side of books annotated or illustrated by Blake. Among them was the now well-known copy of Lavater's "Aphorisms" . . .²

Samuel Palmer's own testimony in a letter to Frederick G. Stephens would seem to settle the question of ownership:

See Lavater's "Aphorisms", translated by Fuseli, I think. I cannot find my copy, which was doubly valuable as having belonged to the illustrious William Blake. That great man had written his own name close to Lavater's on the title-page, and had enclosed both in one heart drawn in pencil . . .³

In sum, there is no evidence that Blake showed his copy of Lavater's *Aphorisms* to John Linnell, but there is good evidence that the book belonged to Samuel Palmer, as Geoffrey Keynes asserted in 1921.⁴ One final point: G. E. Bentley, Jr., and David V. Erdman⁵ once claimed that Samuel Palmer's signature is visible in Blake's copy of *Aphorisms*, but neither I nor Carey S. Bliss of the Huntington Library can find this signature.⁶

¹ Shelfmark Im/B581/Zz794. A previous owner, Eckermann, signed the book on endpaper 7r, wrote the date 17 Feb. 1829, and copied out two of Goethe's comments on Lavater. Beneath these quotations, John Linnell Junior scrupulously noted: "The above writing was here when I bought this copy--(not in Blake's edit[ion])." References to J. Knowles's *Life of Fuseli* (1831) in the younger Linnell's hand are on pp. vii and viii. According to an unattached acquisitions slip in the book, Yale purchased it from W. H. Robinson [the Dealer] on 20 Nov. 1942 for \$15. I had hoped to find that an early transcription of Blake's annotations preserved some of Blake's notes not now legible in the original (Huntington 57431), but this proved not to be the case.

² *Blake Books*, p. 686. A. H. Palmer's undated note presumably dates from after his father's death in 1881. The book is "now well-known" probably because of Gilchrist's extensive quotation of Blake's notes (I, 62-67), or perhaps because of the full but inaccurate transcription of Blake's notes in E. J. Ellis, *The Real Blake* (1907), pp. 122-51.

³ Frederick G. Stephens, *Memorials of William Mulready, R. A.* (London, 1890); quoted and conjecturally dated ?Jan. 1872 by Raymond Lister in his *The Letters of Samuel Palmer* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), II, 837.

⁴ Geoffrey Keynes, *A Bibliography of William Blake* (New York: Grolier Club, 1921), p. 49. I know of no evidence that would confirm Keynes's further assertion that Blake's copy of *Aphorisms* remained for some time in the possession of Samuel Palmer's descendants before its acquisition by Robert Hoe.

⁵ G. E. Bentley, Jr., and Martin K. Nurmi, *A Blake Bibliography* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1964), p. 207; *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1965), p. 799.

⁶ Another ghost is the half-title described by Bentley, *Blake Books*, p. 593. I have found no half-title in four copies of the first edition (including Blake's copy) and six copies of the second edition. The third edition of 1794, however, in some copies has a half-title that reads "APHORISMS. / VOL. I." It is a bit surprising to find this half-title so long after Fuseli is supposed to have abandoned his intention to add a second volume of his own aphorisms on art.