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“For every thing that lives is Holy”:

Authenticity and Inclusion in William Blake’s

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

Alexis E. Lundblom

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Supervisor: Cian Duffy

Abstract

This essay examines the concept of authenticity in relation to William Blake in general and specifically in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790). The Romantic period idealised authenticity but focussed studies into Blake's relationship with authenticity are relatively few. Previous research contextualizing Blake explores themes such as education, politics and religion, but recent research proposes that Blake has previously been inserted into an inadequate political context, suggesting possibly unexplored perspectives on much of Blake's work. This essay's hypothesis is that through examining what form the striving for an authentic ideal takes in Blake's work, a unique focus on inclusion can be found. The aim of this essay is to add an examination of Blake and authenticity to existing research.

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“[I]n a world still dominated by hate, and ruled by oppression, by exploitation, by conquest and brutal military occupation, I think we might still have things to learn from Blake”

– Saree Makdisi, *William Blake and The Impossible History of the 1790s*

Introduction

Poet and printer William Blake (1757–1827) remains one of the most idiosyncratic of the Romantics. In a period that upheld authenticity as one of its highest ideals, Blake might have soared on character alone. But Blake was comparatively unknown in his time, and his contribution to the debate about authenticity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was left to be examined by modern readers.

One of Blake's most important ideas regarding authenticity is his notion of the inner spirit of humanity as an undisputed, truthful quality. To Blake, questioning the source of the human spirit is irrelevant; what should be challenged is that people adhere blindly to interpretations of said source. Blake emphasises the importance of being aware that communicated truth is an interpretation and much of his work revolves around including accounts from seldom heard voices. The more spirits given voice, the more universal our truth and the more authentic our perception has the potential to be.

This essay asks how Blake's work reflects his era's preoccupation with the ideal of authenticity. The hypothesis of this essay is that Blake's work shows a unique focus on the concept of inclusion to achieve an idealised authenticity.

Blake's satirical work *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790) (forthwith *Marriage*) can be read and understood both as an attack on Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), and John Milton (1608–1674) and as a manifesto of subversion of old structures and ideas. As a work concerned with authenticity, *Marriage* provides ample examples of Blake's views on authenticity, but also complicates the issue because it is a satire. Hence, examining Blake about authenticity, and contextualizing *Marriage* in relation to those ideas, both clarifies and complicates our understanding of his position.

Previous related research on Blake examines areas such as education, intertextuality and religion, but his work's relation to the Romantic authentic ideal is mostly mentioned as part of a bigger theme. This essay adds an examination of authenticity to Blake research, by resituating his work in its context and examining its legacy.

First, the essay explores relevant ideas and themes in Blake's work that have been thoroughly analysed in previous research. Then, a similar examination of the concept of authenticity and Romanticism, and a study of the relationship between authenticity, inclusion, allegory and satire in relation to Blake is made. In its penultimate section, the essay explains the connection between Swedenborg, Blake and *Marriage*. Lastly, a close reading of several passages in *Marriage* is made, taking the explored concepts into account.

Blake and His Surrounding World

Before examining what form Blake's idea of authenticity takes, it may be useful to explore how Blake has been interpreted and contextualized in previous research. The idea of Blake being a difficult poet is not a modern invention; even in his own time he was considered "improbable and impossible" (Makdisi 1). However, historical figures are always adjusted retrospectively and Makdisi suggests that Blake has been forced into an interpretative context into which he does not necessarily fit (2–3). Moreover, Frye explains that being depressed and isolated, as Blake has been known to be, was not unique to Blake but to the age surrounding him (5), and these qualities even became part of a somewhat desirable disposition during the Romantic period (Higgins 5). While Frye suggests dismantling Blake's retroactively adjusted *disposition* (12), Makdisi abandons speculation regarding Blake's personality and rather suggests that Blake belonged to a political movement that did not survive as the dominant ideology in the Romantic period (5), something that Erdman also notes as a possibility (162).

The ideas that we associate with the 1790s today were not necessarily the ideas of a majority at the time, but of the most influential people. Recent research has put more emphasis on how diverse Radicalism was during the 1790s and Makdisi suggests that this opposes the notion that Blake was virtually an individual revolution in himself (21). While unique in his way of expressing them, Blake was not alone in his ideas regarding society (Makdisi 21). The notion that survived into modern times was the liberal Radicalism that focussed on the individual, partially because differing notions regarding "identity, belonging [, ...] community, and even freedom itself" were silenced both by contemporary authorities and the liberal-radical movement itself (Makdisi 23). Blake's work might be a rare window into silenced Radical thought.

As opposed to what the voices of the Radicalism that echoes loudest into our time promotes, Blake does not champion individuality. A recurring theme in Blake's works, both published and private, is the focus on the divinity within us all. Makdisi suggests that instead of idealising individuality, Blake proposes humanity as part of one divine body (8); in Blake's equal distribution of divinity in "every living thing" (pl. 27, *CPP* 45¹) lies a clear message of unity. In line with equity regarding human divinity, Blake's work often proposes inviting previously unheard voices to broaden and challenge prevailing truths. One "[Proverb] of Hell" in *Marriage*, states that "What is now proved was once, only imagin'd" (pl. 8 *CPP* 36) which

¹ "pl. #": illuminated plate number. "*CPP*": *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* ed. Erdman.

invites one to view present truths as malleable but does not necessarily exclude the existence of an actual truth at the core of existence. Blake's search for authenticity exposes misconceptions and hears the truth of the inner voice and the importance of individuality lies in its connection to a human community.

Blake had a message to humanity and he wanted to be understood and to communicate. Frye is very adamant that Blake did not aim to be mysterious or obscure in his message (4). Indeed, this is backed up in a letter from Blake to a Reverend Trusler (*CPP* 702), where Blake speaks his intent and ideas clearly, without the language of poetry or prophecy. In this letter, Blake argues that imagination, a concept whose importance to Blake this essay will come back to, in essence *is* our perception of nature, not something unreal or a fancy (Welch 202). Furthermore, Blake praises "instruction" that is "not too Explicit" as the most valuable one "because it rouses the faculties to act" as a reply to what seems to have been the Reverend accusing Blake of being unclear in expressing his ideas (*CPP* 702). To Blake, perceived obscurity can be an attempt to challenge the capabilities of the imagination and anything that prompts the "faculties to act" is something Blake values, which will be discussed in a later section. The letter to Trusler arguably exhibits a lack of self-awareness, but one can also argue that it shows Blake's genuine belief in people's ability to understand art in different ways, as he also in this letter explains that there are "a Great Majority of Fellow Mortals who can Elucidate My Visions" (*CPP* 703). On the theme of inclusion, Blake also stresses that "Folly or Incapacity" can be found in the minds of all people, suggesting that one group should not ever be wholly dismissed based on prejudice (*CPP* 703).

The human mind is a place of immense strength, and possible weakness, to Blake. One of the most quoted expressions from Blake is "mind-forg'd manacles" from "London" in *Songs of Experience* (1793–1794) (8, *CPP* 27) and the phrase pinpoints a mindset that is prevalent throughout Blake's entire body of works. In *America* (1793), Blake suggests that a revolution starts in the mind (Erdman 12) and many passages in *Marriage* address the value of forming one's own opinion. The people of "London" are shackled in their minds, oppressed in a legally occupied city. From "midnight streets" to "blackning Church" (13, 10, *CPP* 27), London is a tainted city of poverty and corrupt authorities. Suggesting that the manacles are "mind-forg'd" emphasizes the extent to which power structures are controlling, how propaganda and fearmongering by authorities can subdue a people, but it also stresses that the way to freedom lies in individual and subversive thought. Blake saw art as "ris[ing] above its time 'perfect and eternal'" (Erdman 272), capable of telling timeless truths: an authentic, prophetic semiotics to echo across the ages. But for this prophetic voice to be true, the speaker

must be free from authoritative control, which is a theme that will be further explored in the section about Swedenborg.

The idea that you do not have to rely on systems, communities and rituals created by authorities is one that much of Blake's work revolves around. In *Marriage*, Blake writes that subsequent to "The ancient Poets animating all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses",

a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar [...]: thus began Priesthood. Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales. And at length they pronounced that the Gods had orderd such things. Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast. (pl. 11; *CPP* 38)

Not only does this passage explicitly state how the speaker in *Marriage* views organised religion — it takes advantage of common people — but for once, Blake mirrors a sentiment often associated with Romanticism: there is something forgotten in human nature and we need to reclaim it. However, this version of what is forgotten does not align with the more known Romantic idea of *natural man*, which is Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (1712–1778) idea regarding what we have lost. Rousseau's ideas will be further explored in the next section.

Blake was a visionary and considered himself such. Frye defines visionary as follows: "A visionary creates, or dwells in, a higher spiritual world in which the objects of perception in this one have become transfigured and charged with a new intensity of symbolism" (8); in other words, the visionary sees more or differently than others. To Blake, communicating with God is part of being a human and he sees no problem in using the spiritual world, and God, as a constant source of inspiration (Frye 8). There is a right and wrong way of being guided by visions, however, and if it "leads him to hero-worship", the visionary misuses his guidance (Frye 217). Misinterpreting one's vision is a sin that Blake accuses Swedenborg of committing, something that will be further explored in the section about Swedenborg.

Authenticity, Sincerity and Romanticism

Authenticity is not a word often used by Blake (Piccitto 244) but he explores the theme of authenticity nevertheless. To effectively examine the concept of authenticity in Blake's work, one must determine which expressions and ideas to pay attention to. Before examining Blake's ideas, however, it is necessary to establish what authenticity and its closely related term *sincerity* generally mean and imply, and specifically what the relationship between the Romantic period and authenticity is.

Defining authenticity and sincerity is not a simple matter. Trilling compares the concepts to love: “best not talked about if [they are] to retain any force of meaning” (120). Authenticity concerns genuineness, originality and an idea of something fundamentally true at the core of existence. Trilling argues that there is an ambivalence attached to the concept of an “essential human nature” (1). He exemplifies this by addressing the fact that literature considered great in the Western world can also be enjoyed in cultures distinct from it, which would attest to a human unity (Trilling 2). However, interpretations of said works often also highlight the differences between cultures (Trilling 2). *If* we decide there is an authentic quality to being human the question that follows is *how* we go about communicating said authenticity, which in turn leads to sincerity. Milnes & Sinanan differentiate between authenticity and sincerity by saying that “authenticity is a state, sincerity a practice” (4), which allows for the conclusion that authentic is something you either are or you are not, whereas sincerity can be chosen to be practised and it can be faked.

Research into authenticity has many different branches. Milnes & Sinanan focus on authenticity's philosophical implications, and Milnes also goes further into linguistic and etymological research. Milnes makes use of Jürgen Habermas' concepts and both Milnes & Sinanan and Trilling employ the terminology and thought of Blake's contemporary Hegel. Milnes & Sinanan pose the question of authenticity's relation to communication on a more linguistic and philosophical level than this essay does (2–11). While this essay explains authenticity's role in the Romantic period and takes into consideration its philosophical and pragmatic roles in said period, it looks more at how the *need* for authenticity affected the Romantic period. While philosophy interacts and intersects with both literature and politics, there is a definite divide in research between authenticity as an epistemological and ontological concept and authenticity as a political and ideological concept. This essay explores what effect authenticity as an ideal had and what form the striving for that ideal took in society and politics.

The Romantic period had a preoccupation with authenticity and sincerity and it was “most urgently” engaged with by the poets of the time (Milnes & Sinanan 11). “Anxiety [...] regarding communication” increased in the late eighteenth century, questioning *how* authenticity could be accurately expressed (Perkins qtd. in Milnes 121). Milnes' essay on the complex idea of making *sense* examines “the inadequacy of the ‘language of the senses’” (120). This inadequacy concerns, among other things, the paradox of describing authenticity using something as deliberate as language. Wordsworth & Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) is the most commonly cited text in discussions of Romanticism and authenticity. The “Preface” (1802) to *Lyrical Ballads* expresses ideas regarding authenticity and how to express it, which makes it

an obvious source when examining Romanticism's relationship with the authentic ideal. One of the intentions stated in the "Preface" is that the poetry in *Lyrical Ballads* would "emanate from the simplicity of 'low and rustic life'" (Milnes & Sinanan 11); a sentiment voicing Romanticism's devaluation of civilization and society, and valorisation of rural, simple environments and sentiments. Wordsworth infused the word *be* with new meaning and both he and Rousseau gave what they called "the sentiment of being" an "unassailable" voice of authority regarding "social and political life": the more conscious we are of our *being*, the more we will know of others (Trilling 122, 92). Searching for authenticity away from premeditation and civilization connects to a disdain for modernity. The modern world has affected our ability to see clearly and authentically, so the Romantic sentiment goes, so we must look for it outside the confines of society.

Swiss-born philosopher Rousseau's ideas were largely idealised during the Romantic period. As previously mentioned, the extent to which ideas such as Rousseau's were *universally* idealised may be questioned, but the fact remains that his thought pervaded much of Romantic literature and he had impactful ideas concerning authenticity. Rousseau favoured expressing emotions rather than curbing them, promoted liberty, idealised individuality and provided the intellectual fuel of the French Revolution. One of Rousseau's main arguments was that of the "natural man", an "original human" that was "healthy, happy, good and", maybe most importantly, "free" ("Jean-Jacques Rousseau" *Major works of political philosophy* par. 3). Rousseau's "discourse of sensibility epitomizes the Romantic impulse to return to ourselves" (Milnes & Sinanan 7) and in trying to define what said "ourselves" could possibly be, Rousseau found it in humanity's history; he saw the formation of society as the place in history where all "human vices [...] were formed" ("Jean-Jacques Rousseau" *Major works of political philosophy* par. 3). In retrospect, one can see how Rousseau's bourgeois solipsism excluded a lot of people in society. He had little trust in the minds of common people, going as far as to suggest they needed a lawgiver with "divine inspiration" to convince them of the agreed-upon truth ("Jean-Jacques Rousseau" *Major works of political philosophy* par. 13). However, rather than dismiss all of Rousseau's ideas as backwards-striving by today's standards, Ferrara for example insists that there is relevance in Rousseau's thought regarding social authenticity (48).

Rousseau's idea of authenticity is often defined as a lack of inauthenticity (Trilling 94). If one, as Ferrara, focusses on Rousseau's thought regarding *social* authenticity, one can understand his idea of *inauthenticity* as the kind that stems from the histrionic insincerity used to flatter people of a higher social class, the insincerity used to make a class journey described by Trilling (14). Authenticity lay in primitive human; forming of society caused people to

compare and compete, so Rousseau's claim goes. Historically, grouping together engendered desires to be something we are not, made us forget our place in the world and distorted our sense of self (Ferrara 47). Rousseau's negative view on human malleability extends to a dislike of imagination, which he claims causes people to envision and desire things, leading to dissatisfaction and conflict (Trilling 60). To Rousseau, the human need to compare oneself to others and the desire to be somewhere else in the social structure eclipses the self eventually and "reduce[s it] to pure exteriority, a mere copy of what society requires" (Ferrara 48). Rousseau's authentic ideal of "natural man" and condemnation of modern society influenced much of Romantic thought.

However, Rousseau's ideas are not applicable to British culture without some adjusting. Scottish contemporary of Rousseau, Adam Smith (1723–1790), can be utilized to represent a more traditionally preromantic philosophy. His *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) proposes that the restricting and checking of naturally strong impulses, or *passions* as Smith calls them, is the way to sympathy (13–14). Milnes & Sinanan explain that "[p]reromantic sympathy was not bound to an inner, authentic selfhood" but rather to behaviour (7). The concept of manners did not disappear with the coming of Romanticism and there existed a worry that the advent of freely-expressed emotions would eradicate politeness (Milnes & Sinanan 8). No one, or at least few, in English Romantic discourse advocated that truth be spoken harshly and impolitely, which shows that ideas such as Smith's were integrated into the emerging ideas, rather than rejected completely (Milnes & Sinanan 8). However, new ideas, such as Rousseau's, made people aware of the notion that dictating how sentiment be shown could in itself be insincere (Milnes & Sinanan 8) and thus clash with the new authentic ideal.

There has been a debate amongst scholars regarding the paradoxical nature of Romanticism's investment in authenticity. Romantic poet Lord Byron (1788–1827) has been criticised for his "tireless *performance* of selfhood" (Milnes & Sinanan 3, citing McGann) but even "Wordsworth's spontaneous outpouring" becomes problematic when discussed in terms of authenticity (Milnes and Sinanan 4). As previously mentioned, the deliberate act of using language to try and describe authenticity loses the very thing it tries to emulate (Milnes & Sinanan 4). Piccitto notes that Judith Pascoe criticises the previously universally held idea regarding the authenticity of the "Preface", using it instead as an example of the plastic quality of Romanticism (243). As Pascoe puts it: "romanticism is founded on theatrical modes of self-representation" (7). In realising the previously mentioned inadequacy of language and trying to find an authentic mode of expression, Romanticism's attempt at reaching authenticity might only lead to a more pronounced inauthenticity.

Despite the insincerity that might be noticeable to a reader today, the audience of the artists of the Romantic period idolized authenticity. The *genius* was valued as someone with a profound connection to their own authenticity. According to Higgins, the idea had a significant impact on the period: “Genius was one of the concepts fuelling the cultural revolution that we now call Romanticism” (2). The old meaning of genius, meaning a person possessed by a spirit, shifted to a description of a personal trait, a shift fuelled by the increased interest in individual uniqueness (Higgins 2). Higgins posits the genius as a figure created by the public – a celebrity. It is a genius seemingly far away from the intimate, divine inner spirit of Blake, where the genius is a voice mediating between God and humanity and thus seemingly closer to the Classical sense of the term. However, Higgins points out that the Romantic understanding of genius, like the Radical thought of the 1790s mentioned by Makdisi, was not “a monolithic concept” (5). Some saw geniuses as “beings who cut themselves off from the world to meditate on higher things” whereas others “represented them as rebellious transgressors who questioned the very foundation of contemporary society” (Higgins 5). Formulated like this, both descriptions could describe Blake but, like Higgins’ Romantic celebrity genius, our image of Blake is, as mentioned, also a construction. However, unlike many of the famous Romantic poets, our image of Blake is mostly made in retrospect due to his relative obscurity during his life. Higgins says that “[t]he essence of genius is its claim to distinctiveness – it stands out from the crowd” (8) and what could be a more accurate description of how Blake is viewed by the world that succeeds him.

When distinguishing Blake’s ideas from what is generally seen as Romantic sentiment, one can look to actual mentions in Blake’s work of for example Rousseau. As Frye points out, Blake “disliked Rousseau enough to give an attack on him a prominent place in *Jerusalem*” (36). To Rousseau’s argument for the natural man, Blake insists that man is not the “solitary majestic lion he would like to be” but weak and pitiful in Rousseau’s “natural” form (Frye 54) but Blake’s distance from ideas such as Rousseau’s is prevalent in more than immediate attacks. Unlike Rousseau, Blake does not see society as a problematic social format and does not blame societal inequity on some fault in humanity’s primitive history. The message in Blake’s work as to where the fault lies is clear: in the misuse of power, and in corrupt authoritative voices. This message is present in virtually all of Blake’s work. As previously mentioned, Blake’s authentic human lies in the connection to divinity, in humanity’s spirit. Truth lies in the present, but it is blackened and bloodied by corrupt, insincere authority, both “Church” and “Palace” (“London” 10, 12, *CPP* 27). Where Rousseau sees common people as lesser and society as an inevitable cul-de-sac of competition and jealousy, Blake maintains that

authoritative exploitation of less fortunate people is the source of humanity's problems.

The Romantic interest in the uniqueness of the artist is not something Blake's work revolves around per se. Blake's idea of the genius is of something available to all, not something that is to be celebrated as a rare quality and that makes someone a celebrity. The Classical idea of a genius that visits a person in intervals is not entirely applicable either; Blake's idea of the genius is a more constant force, the very spirit of humanity (Frye 8). Though divine, Blake's genius is not a thing capriciously bestowed by an unfair God but rather a consistent source of inspiration (Frye 8). Blake does not diminish the *faith* Romanticism invests in the power of the genius; to Blake, listening to the inner spirit — the "Poetic Genius" — will topple corrupt communities (Rix 110).

Intent, Allegory, Satire and Inclusion

The authentic ideal of the Romantic period not only introduces paradoxes and difficulties in trying to define authenticity itself; practising sincerity causes a myriad of new complications as far as authenticity is concerned. Furthermore, it is questionable whether some forms of expression, such as allegory and satire, can be used to express authenticity at all. In this section, the relation between authenticity and intent is examined, allegory and satire are problematized, and the connection between authenticity and inclusion specific to Blake is further explored.

Claiming knowledge regarding what is and what is not authentic causes reaction. Trilling points out that "authenticity is implicitly a polemical concept, [...] dealing aggressively with received and habitual opinion" (94). But the "dealing with" Trilling mentions risks being a rather brief discussion because, as previously mentioned, the concept of authenticity is arguably inherently resistant to discussion; you either are authentic or you are not, and the discussion has trouble going beyond listing individual definitions of the term. Blake's idea of authenticity seems to highlight this certain quality of authenticity and the irrelevance of discussing the truthfulness of authenticity as such. Even though Blake never defines authenticity explicitly, his idea of the human inner spirit is, like authenticity, undisputable (Rix 110). Discussing its existence is irrelevant, or at the very least uninteresting (Frye 17—18). Blake's idea of spirit, and its connection to perception, which will be addressed later in this section, bears resemblance to the previously mentioned concept "sentiment of being", another supposedly irrefutable human capacity (Trilling 122). However, whereas authenticity might be an unassailable quality, sincerity is not.

The connection between authenticity and sincerity concerns action and intent. Social interaction is a balancing act between what we say and what we think, which has become

connected to “the state or quality [...] which we call sincerity” (Trilling 2). The concept of sincerity introduces not only an ability to knowingly act *against* our intent, but an ability to be *unsure* of our intent as well. As previously mentioned, Romanticism saw a shift in the sense of authenticity, and the modern sense of *authentic* with its strong connection to intent originated in the Romantic period. Milnes & Sinanan describe Romanticism as “the crucible for the modern conceptions of sincerity and authenticity” which ended up transforming the sense of *authentic* from concerning “an original *work*” to something “*genuine*” (5, 6, emphasis in original). The focus shifted from describing a physical thing to something that mirrored the intention of an artist (Milnes & Sinanan 6).

Concerning Blake in particular, intent is complicated. Blake research cites many unpublished sources, from unfinished works to personal letters and annotations. The work Blake published is very deliberate and considered; he spent enough time editing that Frye suggests that Blake “may be said to have blotted more lines than any other important poet of English literature” (6). Blake published comparatively little of what is now considered his complete works, and research into Blake often goes into a large amount of material not intended for publishing. When analysing literature, intent is always a complicated, arguably unimportant, matter but it is difficult to avoid when discussing authenticity. The blend of published and private works as a basis for research is not unique to Blake but singular, or at least uncommon, in how that blend is distributed and divided in content and amount. Blake’s published work is leavened with allegory and prophecy and holds no instruction or explanation outside of poetic language. In looking for guidance, private and unpublished texts can provide a cipher for Blake’s allusions and intertexts as well as for historical context from Blake’s perspective. The unpublished works might not have been needed historically to understand the texts, but for modern research it does seem to offer invaluable insight into the texts that Blake did chose to publish.

The way intent is judged is by means of communication and, as such, who one communicates with becomes part of how authenticity is conveyed. In line with Blake’s idea of the singularity and importance of each individual’s inner spirit, there is often a theme of inclusion in Blake’s work. Blake “proposes the prophetic power of the poor and unlearned, of Asians and Africans, of his ‘fellow labourers,’ and of children” (Makdisi 4, quote from *Public Address CPP* 580) and that “Simple Minds Understand [the Bible] best” (*CPP* 667). Furthermore, Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1789–1794) often utilizes a language that is easily understood, without excluding complexity. The inclusion of illustration in Blake’s work provides yet another angle from which a work can be understood, regardless

of someone's literacy. To Blake, caring about being understood, and valorising the understanding of demographics often overlooked, connects to valorising authenticity. However, Blake wrote many satirical works, and even at its simplest, his poetry never lacks allegory which arguably disagrees with both communication and authenticity.

Allegory and satire complicate understanding and inclusion. Trilling's definition of sincerity as "a congruence between feeling and avowal" (7) collides with the concepts of allegory and satire. Satire and allegory use indirect language, allusions, and rely on an intertextual understanding in its reader. Whereas allegory strives to communicate and often to educate, in fables for example, satire's nature is less concerned with such noble goals and more with expressing malcontent and often with promoting the wit of the writer. A satirical work's dependence on specific situations, people, or texts confines the comprehension of the work to a certain era and a specific group of people, which does not promote inclusion, nor does it adhere to Blake's aim of making art transcend the limits of history. In addition, the nature of satire disagrees with trust, and Miles proposes that trust is "implicit in sincerity", without which "communication [...] begins to break down" (134). Satire invites one to see something truthfully by employing indirect address and creates an uncertainty in its reader regarding its intent which creates a communicational paradox.

Blake's relationship with allegory is complex. He does not consider all allegory equal and "differentiates 'Vision' from 'Fable or Allegory'" deeming the latter "totally ... inferior" (Welch 201, citing Erdman 554). The allegory Blake considers connected to "Vision" and, as such, the valuable form of allegory, is one "addressed to the Intellectual powers, while it is altogether hidden from the Corporeal Understanding" (*Letter to Butts CPP 730*). This definition is specific, but still uses Blake's own terminology, which is not further explain by Blake himself. Frye attempts to decipher Blake's expressions as follows: "Corporeal Understanding" is trying to decipher a poem's "meaning" through finding "genuine obscurities", historically specific allusions and allegory for example. "Intellectual powers", then, is connected to understanding the poem as a work of unity and looks more to form and "proportion" (Frye 9–10). Blake understands meaning and form in poetry as belonging to the same unity (Frye 9), which connects to his promotion of the intellect as the more relevant faculty to address. Overall, Blake did promote vision over allegory, and his general resistance to allegory as something positive is so consistent that the mention of allegory in this particular letter is dismissed by Damon as a "slip of the pen" (18). Damon suggests that Blake's understanding of allegory is that it "is to poetry what dogma is to religion" (17): a system that comes with an authoritatively decided truth, leaving no room for imagination or individual perception.

Whether calling it intellectually addressed allegory or vision, Blake is an advocate of the intellect and imagination as opposed to narrow, pre-determined allegories.

Claiming that intellectual knowledge has more worth than other knowledge is an easily misinterpreted proposition. Unless contextualized, Blake's elevation of the intellect might give the impression of excluding the "Simple Minds" he expresses admiration of (*CPP* 667). To understand how being able to understand intellectual allegory and being of a simple mind are not mutually exclusive one must look to Blake's idea of perception.

Perception unites authenticity and inclusion in Blake. Frye explains that Blake sees perception as something singular to each individual (15) which, as previously mentioned, is also how Blake sees the human inner spirit: unique but connected. To Blake, what is perceived initially, before reflection sets in, enriches the imagination and creates one's unique perception of reality (Frye 15–16). The idea that more sensory experiences enrich the imagination, which in turn creates an easier understanding of intellectual allegory, is what separates a fool from the previously mentioned simple mind. A simple mind has no choice in the matter and has a valuable, innocent perspective, whereas the fool can choose to "become wise" if he "persist[s] in his folly" (pl. 7, *CPP* 36): a fool can enrich his imagination but chooses not to. Also in *Marriage*, Blake addresses the clutter he experiences exists before humanity's perception and what could be achieved if we made ourselves aware of our smudged lenses: "If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is: infinite" (pl. 14, *CPP* 39).

Another example from *Marriage* combines Blake's complex ideas regarding reality and perception: "Every thing possible to be believed is an image of truth" (pl. 8, *CPP* 37). This "Proverb" not only defends individual perception as unique, it also questions whether *anyone's* perception can be considered real and authentic. Everyone's perception is singular, but what is perceived is often interpretations of a source. Blake's often-quoted dictum "I must Create a System or be enslav'd by another Mans [sic]" (from *Jerusalem* pl. 10 *CPP* 153), addresses what Frye describes as Blake "warning" us to not view sources as anything but "sources of analogues" (12). Creating your own system does not automatically make it more authentic than another, but it removes the notion that an authoritatively held perception is truer than one's own. In valuing individual perception, becoming aware of that we all interpret reality, and not upholding authoritative interpretation, humanity can remove their "mind-forg'd manacles" ("London" 8 *CPP* 27).

Swedenborg and his effect on Blake

In examining *Marriage*, the teachings of Swedish philosopher, mystic and prophet Swedenborg

provide necessary tools to achieve corporeal understanding, to use Blake's expression. For *Marriage*, Swedenborg's texts provide a big part of the previously mentioned cipher often needed to interpret Blake's work. The connection between the Swedenborgian intertext and *Marriage* does more than provide a cultural cipher, however, when examining authenticity. Blake's criticism of Swedenborg in large part concerns faulty interpretation, a theme in *Marriage* that transcends its intertext and sets out to criticize the lack of authenticity among authoritative voices overall. Before examining *Marriage* more in-depth, however, an overview of Swedenborg and Blake's relation to him is needed.

As Rix explains, "Swedenborg was at the centre of a cult revival in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (108). Like Blake, Swedenborg experienced visions but also claimed to have found "the hidden", indirectly insinuating *authentic*, "meaning of scripture", which Swedenborg could observe through what he called "'correspondences'" (Rix 108). Swedenborg's expressions and interpretations are heavily alluded to in *Marriage* and the Swedenborgian New Jerusalem Church was the only religious community Blake has been known to attend (Rix 107). While it is easy to see how Swedenborg's earlier ideas of subverting the doctrine of the Church of England seemed attractive to Blake, the strictness and increasingly orthodox views of the New Jerusalem Church are probable reasons why Blake left the community shortly after joining it. Erdman (142–143) has also taken note of Blake's dislike of Swedenborg and the first plates of *Marriage* were composed in a rage over Swedenborgianism (Rix 113).

Rix proposes that we look to the significance of *antinomianism* as being a "central characteristic of Blake" (109). Antinomianism rejects the idea that good deeds and rituals are what grant you a place in heaven and instead puts subjective faith alone as enough to be a good Christian. To an antinomian, good deeds come naturally to one who has faith, but no authority should dictate what qualifies as faith (Rix 115). With such focus on rejection of authority, it is unsurprising that antinomianism "has prospered in various forms in the history of English dissent" (Rix 109). Antinomianism rejects Moral Law, something that Blake proposes that Christ himself does in the Bible. To Blake, Christ was a rebel, a perfect leader for an antinomian uprising and an advocate of not adhering to rules, not even the Commandments: "'no virtue can exist without breaking these ten commandments: Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse: not from rules'" (Rix 112; pl. 23–24, *CPP* 43). As previously mentioned, Blake favoured action to inaction, and inaction was what the Swedenborgian rituals, blind adherence to Moral Law and focus on good deeds as the road to salvation stood for to Blake (Rix 111). Rix explains that to Blake, to act is virtue and "any law that hinders the freedom to act" is oppression (113). At

first glance, it might seem as if Blake's antinomian thought promotes anarchic chaos, but that is not the case (Rix 113). Moral Law is not wrong – murder and theft “‘is Hindering Another’” – but it should not be used as “an external code of instruction” (Rix 113). Blake's faith in humanity's ability to judge based on one's own inner spirit agrees with his promotion of antinomianism.

Frye states that it is “impossible to understand Blake without understanding how he read the Bible” (11) and that extends to Blake's understanding of Swedenborg's interpretation of the Bible. In line with Blake's idea regarding individual perception is his accusation that Swedenborg is not able to properly interpret his own divine visions. One of the fiercer passages in *Marriage* directed at Swedenborg addresses his faulty interpretations and how he, based on them, has acted incorrectly. In this passage, Blake suggests that Swedenborg manages to realise that organized religion has been faulty but still “end[s] up writing ‘all the old falshoods’” (Rix 111; pl. 22, *CPP* 43). The reason Blake provides regarding why Swedenborg inevitably ends up repeating old mistakes is that “He conversed with Angels who are all religious, & conversed not with Devils who all hate religion” (pl. 22, *CPP* 43): you will not arrive at an authentic perception if your interpretation is selective or exclusionary.

The previously mentioned quote from *Jerusalem* — “I must Create a System or be enslav'd by another Mans” (pl. 10, *CPP* 153) — can be read as a testament to the importance of being aware of that everything is an interpretation. Interpretation is one of the reasons Blake inverts the good and evil elements of heaven and hell. In *Marriage*, Angels are self-absorbed and self-righteous; devils are open-minded and, arguably to Blake, only devils due to angels interpreting them as such. Not only is *Marriage* a text offering a different view on Swedenborgianism and Christianity, but much of the theme in *Marriage* regards what this essay proposes is Blake's way of reaching an idealised authenticity: inviting new voices and hearing their side of the story.

Marriage as a Defence and Criticism of Authenticity and Inclusion

One does not have to move further than the title of *Marriage* to know that its overall suggestion is the merging and subverting of dichotomies. Even outside of *Marriage's* titular context as a satire of Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell* (1758), the very idea of heaven and hell is that they are opposites; this idea is ingrained in Western society, however secular. *Marriage* invites its reader to challenge established views regarding perception, authenticity and systems.

To a modern reader, the characters in *Marriage* might seem more shocking than originally intended and contextualization is needed. The staging of interactions between angels

and devils in *Marriage* is a direct reference to Swedenborg's visions (Rix 112). The title of the “Memorable Fanc[ies]” alludes to Swedenborg's “Memorable Relation”: prophetic visions Swedenborg experienced which involved angels and devils discussing “God and Nature” (Rix 112). In *Marriage*, the angel “is an orthodox believer” (Rix 112) and the portrait of such a believer that Blake paints is one of naivete and blind trust in what they have been told, which results in prejudice against the devils and demons: the poets, antinomians and dissidents. Accusing humans of being devils might seem disgracing, but this too is a Swedenborgian concept. Swedenborg held the belief that angels and devils were the shape humans took in the afterlife. According to him, antinomians especially would take on the shape of devils in their “spiritual form” (Rix 116) – the form the Book of Revelations describes souls as taking in New Jerusalem. In this context, it is at least a little less outrageous for a Christian to suggest that Christ is a devil, as Blake arguably does in *Marriage*.

Marriage's critique of inauthentic interpretation is not limited to Swedenborg; Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) is also scrutinised. While Blake wrote a whole text called *Milton* (1804), that does not mean that his thoughts on the poet and his legacy started there. Frye calls Blake's mention of Milton in *Marriage* a “famous attack” and draws attention to Blake calling “Milton's God [...] the real Satan” (219). But reading the passage with Rix's Swedenborg-analysis, it is not necessarily an attack and, to be fair to Blake, he never calls God Satan, as Frye suggests. Another reading of the passage Frye refers to — “But in the Book of Job Miltons Messiah is call'd Satan” (pl. 5; *CPP* 34) — would be one focussing on Satan as Messiah, which does not necessarily mean that the opposite is true, i.e. that God is Satan. *Marriage* is about abolishing the old binaries and, as such, nothing can be taken for granted as far as common deduction goes.

The section that names Milton — part of a section called “The voice of the Devil” (pl. 5, *CPP* 34) — is one that shows both Blake's focus on inclusion of seldom heard accounts, but also again on *Marriage*'s theme of uprooting preconceptions regarding binaries. The section clearly signals whose view-point we are privy to: “[T]he Devils account is, that the Messiah fell. & formed a heaven of what he stole from the Abyss” states the speaker of *Marriage* (pl. 5–6. *CPP* 34–35). If one agrees with Frye's interpretation of this passage as an attack and one that means that God is still “the creator of the physical universe which is the subterranean cave or hell of eternity” (219), one might get slightly confounded by Messiah “form[ing] a heaven of what he stole from the Abyss” and what follows:

This is shewn in the Gospel, where he prays to the Father to send the comforter

or Desire that Reason may have Ideas to build on, the Jehovah of the Bible being no other than he, who dwells in flaming fire.

Know that after Christs death, he became Jehovah. (pl. 6, *CPP* 35)

Frye insists that Blake sees no hero in *Paradise Lost* and suggests that Blake transfers this notion into *Marriage* (219). The marriage as such seems to Frye to be a melting of all agents of creation and human passions into one disastrous limbo where no one emerges the victor (219). If one instead, when reading this passage, takes into consideration the Swedenborgian connection and Blake's view of Christ as a devil as something wholly positive, this passage gives a bleak account of Christ's life before he died and "became Jehovah", but tells of a triumphant afterlife. If one does not invert Satan and Messiah as such, but rather focusses on seeing them as two sides of the same character, one might arrive at a different marriage than Frye. "Messiah fell", the devil tells us, and saw Hell, the place where imagination and desire dwell. He took what he needed to build Heaven, but left part of himself in Hell, the part that is the Devil. "Reason" cannot build anything without "Desire", and so Christ, while alive, prays for Desire, "the comforter", to return to him. If the "Jehovah of the Bible" is the one "who dwells in flaming fire" and Christ becomes this one after death, one conclusion is that he finally is back in what the orthodox angels call Hell, reunited with the part of him he had to abandon for the heaven of Reason. And thus, in Christ's death, the marriage of Heaven and Hell is complete, still Christ, but not one confined to Reason. In this reading, Blake's focus on unity and abolishing of the old binaries comes through pronounced.

Seeing Christ as someone dynamic, who built Reason as a solution but was able to move on from it upon realising its limitations, resonates with Blake's overall ideas regarding authenticity. In inviting more accounts, a more accurate truth is arrived at and a Messiah for the rebels emerges. However, one might argue that the specific focus on inclusion in *Marriage* produces yet another narrow description of authenticity since it condemns Swedenborg's view so extensively. Whereas other of Blake's works optimistically voice the opinion that the downtrodden and ostracized have unique and valuable perspectives, it is difficult to ignore that *Marriage* comes from a place of frustration and that so much of its focus lies on correcting someone else's vision. In retrospect, *Marriage* works as a testament to how difficult it is to successfully practise the kind of inclusion much of Blake's work promotes.

On the topics of perception, interpretation and authenticity, there is a passage in *Marriage* that can be read as an examination of how different perceptions affect our understanding of reality. The fourth "Memorable Fancy" begins with an angel lamenting the

speaker's position in hell, to which the speaker proposes that he and the angel perceive the speaker's "eternal lot" together "and see whether [the angel's] lot or [the speaker's] is most desirable" (pl. 17, *CPP* 41). What follows is a rather intense description of what the two experience, filled with Swedenborgian intertext (Rix 120). As their journey ends and the angel leaves, the speaker's perception of the place around him immediately shifts (pl. 19, *CPP* 41–42). Experience and perception of an event change depending on who senses it and Blake ends the paragraph by stressing the importance and value of allowing new information to inspire and affect you: "The man who never alters his opinion is like standing water, & breeds reptiles of the mind" (pl. 19, *CPP* 42). The "Memorable Fancy" ends on a reflection regarding how the effect of someone else's perception might, to an orthodox soul such as the angel, feel like a forceful imposition. An imposition not in the sense of *deceit*, as in the beginning of the "Memorable Fancy", but as something affecting you whether you like it or not, as the angel complains that the speaker's "phantasy has imposed upon me" (pl. 20, *CPP* 42). To this, the speaker professes: "We impose on one another", making the angel's accusation sound like childish complaining, and suggesting that everyone is affected by human interaction and what matters is what you make of said imposition (pl. 20, *CPP* 42).

Marriage addresses Blake's idea that the authenticity of the inner spirit is unassailable. An example of this can be found in the passage where the speaker in *Marriage* questions how one can be certain that the voice of God, i.e. the source of the inner spirit, you are hearing is the voice of an authentic God:

The Prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel dined with me, and I asked them how they dared so roundly to assert. that God spake to them; and whether they did not think at the time, that they would be misunderstood, & so be the cause of imposition. (pl. 12, *CPP* 38)

Since Blake himself claimed to hear God every day, one can speculate that when he voiced this, he might have been asked the same question. The continuation of the conversation, claiming a "firm perswasion" as enough to move mountains echoes the sentiment addressed earlier: that questioning the reality of your experiences is uninteresting and removes focus from what is important (pl. 12, *CPP* 38–39; Frye 16). In both *Marriage*'s "I cared not for consequences but wrote" (pl. 12, *CPP* 38) and in the continuation of the previously cited "I must Create a System" from *Jerusalem* — "I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create" (*CPP* 153) — Blake's message is clear: we waste time debating whether or not things are authentic, we instead

need to create and strive to enrich our imagination to be able to interpret the inner spirit more authentically. Isaiah does not *hear* the voice of God in his ear, he receives all the confirmation he needs of God's existence by observing “the infinite in every thing” (pl. 12, *CPP* 38). In these arguably slightly irritated passages questioning the point of debating authenticity, one of the issues with Blake’s message of inclusion is discernible. In abandoning reasoning and comparison and simply creating from a place of emotion, however thoroughly edited, contradictions might arise.

Such a contradiction can be found in the fact that *Marriage* is a satire, a fact that can be used as a counterargument against its message of inclusion. As previously shown, satire is a literary form arguably in direct conflict with authenticity, which is connected to its collision with inclusion. A satire requires prior knowledge of a text or situation, but it also arguably needs the reader to share the same sentiment regarding its source as the one of the satire's author. A person with less intimate knowledge of Swedenborgianism might not know what to make of the allusions in *Marriage*, while someone who is familiar but does not share Blake's dislike would be likely to dismiss the work altogether. The fact that *Marriage* satirizes much of the thought found in Swedenborg's *True Christian Religion (TCR)* might be a mediator in this situation. According to Rix, *TCR* was often used by English Swedenborgians “as an introduction to prospective converts” (119), which means that common people might have been more likely to be familiar with it than of other writings that were only known to practising Swedenborgians. Furthermore, Blake was likely not the only one sharing these sentiments regarding Swedenborgianism in England. There were rifts and differing cultures within Swedenborgianism, and Blake was very possibly part of an antinomian branch sharing his sentiments, not a lone malcontent (Rix 115–116). However, the fact remains that *Marriage*, despite its many themes of inclusion, can be argued to be exclusionary in its form as a satire.

Marriage’s closing line — “For every thing that lives is Holy” — (pl. 27 *CPP* 45) can be read as a desire to eradicate oppression and exclusion. Rix points out that this line is “a fitting conclusion to [...] *Marriage*” on basis of the work being a satire of Swedenborg, “for whom the Commandments were ‘so holy that nothing could be holier’” (Rix 110). Blake addressing Swedenborg's pettiness and exclusion can be a symbol of Blake’s condemnation of authoritarian figures at large and of societal constructs that oppress based on supposed individual worth; it is a rallying cry for unity and inclusion. However, the message becomes complex when contextualized. In all its simple, seemingly inclusionary message, the fact remains that it is the closing line of an occasionally deeply frustrated and personal work, two elements that have been shown in this essay to be possibly counterproductive to an inclusionary

and authentic message. Perhaps it can be read as not only including the people forgotten by corrupt authorities, but also as the ultimate forgiveness for being misled by one's vision. We are all united in our authentic divine spirit; not even the fool is irrevocably lost, and any human led astray by their own interpretations can find their way again.

Conclusion

Contextualizing Blake offers insights matched in singularity only by his body of work itself. Exploring such a complicated and fundamentally existential idea as authenticity and the consequences of it being an ideal during the Romantic period reveals a concept with a complex history and a period with an existential crisis. Using Blake's ideas regarding the human spirit as a window into the early Romantic period might at first glance seem an endeavour only emphasizing Blake's reputation as an outsider. However, research suggests that ideas seen as universal for the Romantic period might not have been as widespread as generally thought, and through deciphering Blake's expressions and historical context, one might instead detect a seldom seen side of the Romantic period and its authentic ideals. In examining *Marriage* on the topic of authenticity, Blake's specific ideas regarding the value of inclusion and individual interpretation become discernible. However, what can also be recognized is Blake's struggle with authentic ideals in relation to authoritative corruption; when the will to criticize dominates a work, the message of inclusion is demoted. *Marriage* celebrates new angles on conventionally accepted binaries and systems while also illuminating the complications of using satire to illustrate the truth.

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