Hawliyat is the official peer-reviewed journal of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Balamand. It publishes articles from the field of Humanities.

**Journal Name:** Hawliyat  
**ISSN:** 1684-6605  
**Title:** A proposal for Revaluation: Points of Contact and Sides of Likeness between William Blake and Walt Whitman  
**Authors:** Ryan J Davidson

**To cite this document:**

https://doi.org/10.31377/haw.v18i0.78

**Permanent link to this document:** DOI: https://doi.org/10.31377/haw.v17i0.78

Hawliyat uses the Creative Commons license CC BY-NC-SA that lets you remix, transform, and build upon the material for non-commercial purposes. However, any derivative work must be licensed under the same license as the original.
A Proposal for Revaluation: Points of Contact and Sides of Likeness between William Blake and Walt Whitman

Ryan DAVIDSON

There can be few books in the world like these; I can remember one poet only whose work seems to me the same or similar in kind; a poet as vast in aim, as daring in detail, as unlike others, as coherent to himself, as strange without and as sane within. The points of contact and sides of likeness between William Blake and Walt Whitman are so many and so grave, as to afford some ground of reason to those who preach the transition of souls or transfusion of spirits. The great American is not a more passionate preacher of sexual or political freedom than the English artist.¹

It is in these words, from his work William Blake: A Critical Essay published in 1868, that Algernon Charles Swinburne makes the first comparison between William Blake (1757–1829) and Walt Whitman (1819–1892). Swinburne’s understanding of the points of contact between Blake and Whitman is limited to their aims, the details each poet chooses for emphasis, their uniqueness, and a reference to their views on sexual and political freedom. This connection has lasted more than a century, and it is in the same spirit as that expressed by Swinburne that this connection has been maintained: one of tone, feel, and style, but not heretofore one of close critical analysis. What I am proposing here is the theoretical framework that could allow for such an understanding.

For the purposes of articulating this argument, I first establish the tendency of scholars and critics to refer to the works of Blake and Whitman as having certain affinities—by “affinities” I mean similarities based in their reactions to stimuli rather than Whitman’s direct engagement with the work of Blake. I accomplish this through citing specific instances from the poetry of Blake and Whitman to demonstrate

the grounds on which these comparisons are based. Primary among the concerns of this project is creating an understanding of Blake’s publication history. This outline of the public availability of Blake’s work is integral in that it establishes the scarcity of Blake’s work prior to 1863. As a result of Blake’s relative lack of publication, the cause of these affinities between his work and that of Whitman—evident even in the 1855 edition of Leaves of Grass—cannot be direct influence. Instead, the root of these affinities must be sought in a variety of influences, shared and mediating, which work to create the appearance of similarity between the works of Blake and Whitman. By “shared influence” I mean works which both Blake and Whitman encountered, and by “mediating influences” I mean authors who directly engaged with Blake’s work and then bore an influence on Whitman.

One of the key starting points for this notion is Harold Bloom’s 1973 study of influence The Anxiety of Influence. I believe that his theories, as espoused in this text, are both too complicated, in places like his 6 types of misreading, and too simple, particularly as this idea of indirect influence is concerned, but many of the concepts underlying his broader conclusions are fundamental to the work of this project. The following historical definition of influence, provided by Bloom, is of interest for the evolutionary perspective it provides:

As first used, to be influenced meant to receive an ethereal fluid flowing in upon one from the stars, a fluid that affected one’s character and destiny, and that altered all sublunary things. A power—divine and moral—later simply a secret power—exercised itself, in defiance of all that seemed voluntary in one.²

Bloom makes evident that the idea of influence is one that is evolving, and then goes on to place his theories on this spectrum. It is this “all that seemed voluntary” that is of note. A conceit of any discussion of influence must be that a writer is making conscious decisions. Bloom’s description here views influence as beyond the control of the writer being influenced; I concede the point that there are influences that work on a subconscious level, but to draw any worthwhile conclusions from this project it must be assumed that these influences work on a

conscious level as well.

This assumption is necessitated by the nascent form of American literary culture in the early and mid-nineteenth century. A brief outline of precisely what this literary culture would have felt like to American and British writers is provided by Weisbuch in his book *Atlantic Double-Cross*. To be clear, the position of American literary culture in the mid-nineteenth century is tenuous at best. Weisbuch describes the precariousness of the situation in the following terms:

American writers required of themselves literary qualities that would set their works apart from European and particularly from English literary models. The British told them over and again that they would fail in this endeavour because America lacked a sufficiently full history. The consequences of such an absence, they argued, were many and disastrous: little to commemorate and an insufficient passage of time to allow for the mythic enlargements of fact on which much epic and romance depend; no national identity and thus none of those national manners... that imbue life and literature with myriad associations; and no social classes... with the attendant possibilities of representative characterization.³

Whitman, as we will see, took this situation and turned it to his advantage. Whitman takes the fact that there is “little to commemorate” and none of the “mythic enlargements” and begins to create his own myth of personality. He also takes the American lack of a clear national identity or defined class structure and uses this to create a poetry that speaks both to and for the American people. What is key here is the idea that American writers were striving to distinguish their works from those of their European contemporaries. It is in this reacting against, or taking advantage of, the perceived disadvantages of American literary culture that we can come to understand this relationship as “post-colonial”.

What must be made clear from the outset is that it was not until Anne Burrow Gilchrist moved her family to the United States in 1876 that Whitman would gain direct exposure to Blake’s work. To this end the changes Whitman makes between the 1872 and 1881 editions of *Leaves of Grass* would be of great interest to an examination of direct

---

influence. This edition was published after his relationship with the Gilchrist family had begun. It is at this point that Whitman directly engages with Blake’s work for the first time. Through this relationship, Whitman would finally have complete access to one of the largest collections of Blake’s work, both art and poetry, that existed during his lifetime. It is in the 1881 edition of *Leaves of Grass* that the first direct influence of Blake on Whitman is to be found. This is an effort to understand whether, and if so how, Whitman’s work came to appear similar to the work of Blake prior to 1876.

William Blake is now regarded as one of the most important figures in the early stages of the British Romantic movement. In his own day Blake was largely unknown as a poet. As Deborah Dorfman describes it, it was the nineteenth-century revival of Blake’s work that is responsible for his current reputation. Only Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* was published in conventional typography and almost unexpurgated prior to the twentieth century. It is this edition—called the Wilkinson edition, after the editor, notable Swedenborgian John James Garth Wilkinson—which Emerson was given in 1842. It is due in large part to the efforts of Alexander Gilchrist, Swinburne, Wilkinson and William Butler Yeats that Blake’s work has endured into the twenty-first century.

In 1863 the first book length biography of William Blake was published. It was titled, *The Life of William Blake*, with the subtitle *Pictor Ignotus*, or “painter unknown” and written by Alexander Gilchrist. Many of Blake’s pieces are published here for the first time in conventional typography, including poems from “Poetical Sketches,” “Songs of Innocence,” “Songs of Experience,” “The Book of Thel,” and “Ideas of Good and Evil,” also known as “The Pickering Manuscript.” The biographical work of this text is largely responsible for the legend of William Blake as it has persisted into the twenty-first century. Gilchrist’s work did little to deepen the critical understanding of Blake’s

---

work⁶. It is the proliferation of Blake’s work, as much as the lionizing of Blake the man, that makes this a key text in the development of an understanding of Whitman’s relationship to Blake.

Five years after the publication of Gilchrist’s *Life of Blake*, Algernon Charles Swinburne published *Blake: A Critical Essay*. Swinburne’s *Blake* attempts to maintain an objective, critical distance from the works considered. Swinburne spends little time recapitulating the biographical work of Gilchrist and instead engages primarily with the work of developing a critical understanding of Blake’s prophetic works. It is in this text where many of Blake’s prophetic works are first presented to the public. It is Swinburne’s recognition of the value of Blake’s prophetic poems, as much as his engaging with the affinities between Blake and Whitman that makes his *William Blake: A Critical Essay* a significant text for the purposes of this project.

Before Gilchrist’s *Life of Blake*, there was little of Blake’s work available to the general reading public, and this would remain true until the pivotal date of 1863. After this point, Whitman would begin to encounter Blake’s life and work in some surprising ways, including a relationship, epistolary for the most part, with Anne Gilchrist, the widow of Alexander Gilchrist. I now provide an outline of the availability and dissemination of Blake’s work prior to 1863. This is necessary to develop an understanding of the character and qualities of the works of Blake that Whitman could have encountered prior to 1863. All of the works of Blake to which Whitman might have been exposed prior to 1863 fall within the category of Blake’s lyrical poems. Reproductions of “The Tyger,” “Song ‘I love the jocund dance,’” “Song ‘How sweet I roamed from field to field,’” “The Divine Image,” “Laughing Song,” “Song ‘Such pleasure as the teeming earth,’” and “Holy Thursday” appeared first, in normal typography and with any circulation to speak of, in Benjamin Heath Malkin’s work *A Father’s Memoirs of His Child* in 1806.

---

These eight poems were the main representations of Blake’s work publicly available until 1848. This work of Malkin’s began a critical discussion of Blake’s life and work. However, Malkin has the dubious distinction of being one of the first to publish the opinion that Blake’s creativity and imagination could be understood as madness. Malkin writes:

By them [the sceptic and the rational believer] have the higher powers of this artist [Blake] been kept from public notice, and his genius tied down, as far as possible, to the mechanical department of his profession. By them, in short, has he been stigmatised as an engraver, who might do well if he was not mad.

Malkin is not questioning Blake’s sanity in this excerpt, but he is perpetuating this perception of Blake’s work by the mere mention of it. It is, according to Malkin, a result of the critical mechanisms in place at the time of Blake’s creative productions that Blake’s work is unknown. These threads of critical engagement and questions of Blake’s sanity were to be taken up by Gilchrist and then Swinburne. However, in spite of Blake’s publication in American periodicals in the 1840s, it was to be almost sixty years before anything approaching scholarly interest was renewed.

In 1848, at a time when Blake and his work were neglected in England, nine poems from his Poetical Sketches appeared in the Harbinger, the weekly periodical that had been the official organ of Brook Farm and which, with that organization's demise, had moved to New York City late in 1847. In June 1848, the Harbinger published Blake’s “To Spring,” “To Summer,” “To Autumn,” and “To Winter” and on July 8, 1848, the Harbinger also published “To the Evening Star,” “To Morning,” and three songs from the Poetical Sketches: “Song ‘How sweet I roam’d,’” “Song ‘My silks and fine array,’” and

(7) Idib. 17.
(10) “Poetry: To Spring, To Summer, To Autumn, To Winter,” Harbinger, Devoted to Social and Political Progress 7, no. 8 (June 24, 1848): 57.
“Song ‘Love and Harmony combine’”\(^1\). It is certain that if Whitman encountered Blake before the critical biographies of the 1860s, it was in this form and via the *Harbinger* that he found them. I will briefly discuss the following excerpt from Blake’s “To Autumn” to illustrate the contrast between Blake’s lyrical poems and Whitman’s work. Blake writes:

\begin{verbatim}
O Autumn, laden with fruit, and stained
With the blood of the grape, pass not, but sit
Beneath my shady roof; there thou may'st rest,
And tune thy jolly voice to my fresh pipe,
And all the daughters of the year shall dance!
\end{verbatim}

There are a few points of Blake’s construction of this piece, most notably meter, syntax, and diction that immediately make evident the contrast between Blake’s lyrical works and the poetry of Whitman as exemplified by his 1855 *Leaves of Grass*. Whitman’s work does in fact contain multitudes, so it is difficult to make categorical statements about his diction and syntax. However, there is a formality to Blake’s diction and syntax as a result of the closely metered lines. Iambic pentameter forces these lines into a stilted cadence rather than the natural rhythm that Whitman and Blake, in his later works, strive for. In terms of diction, Blake’s use of “thou,” “may’st,” and “thy” convey a formality that Whitman would seek to avoid—for the most part—in *Leaves of Grass*. This excerpt from “To Autumn” is representative of the character of these nine poems that Whitman could have encountered before Gilchrist’s 1863 biography of Blake. And, although each of these nine poems is meritorious, it is clear that they are not representative of the work that is read as connecting Blake’s poetry with that of Whitman.

Of all his works, Blake sold somewhere between thirty and seventy-five self-published copies during his lifetime, and only *The

---


French Revolution was almost published by Joseph Johnson in 1791\(^{13}\). The complete catalogue of Blake’s published poems is limited to twenty-five of his lyric poems\(^{14}\). As will come to be seen, Whitman had a Viking sensibility toward the written word. This idea of a “Viking sensibility” is one expressed variously as Whitman’s borrowing, pillaging, appropriating, paraphrasing, or outright plagiarising; I group all these terms under this one phrase. As Blake was a relatively unknown writer Whitman could have plundered his work with impunity. As Floyd Stovall writes in his work The Foreground of Leaves of Grass: “Whitman was not averse to the use of… undistinguished poets if they might serve his purpose”\(^{15}\). But there are few parallels to be found between those works available prior to 1863 and Whitman’s Leaves of Grass. the elements of the prosodic and ideological affinities between Blake and Whitman are evident in Blake’s work only in those called his prophetic works. It is for this reason that the two mid-nineteenth century biographies serve as a cornerstone on which this proposal rests.

The apparent similarities I will demonstrate between Blake and Whitman evident in early iterations of Leaves of Grass are to be accounted

---


for through literary influences besides that of a direct influence of Blake on Whitman. As Blake’s work had only a small readership in America prior to the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, the influence of Blake on Whitman must occur in, or after, the 1860s. Alexander Gilchrist’s *Life of William Blake* (1863), with its reproductions of Blake’s work, and Algernon Charles Swinburne’s *William Blake: A Critical Essay*, with its reproductions of Blake’s prophetic works, provide the first major disseminations of Blake’s work that would have allowed Whitman to engage with it. Swinburne’s *Blake* is doubly significant for its more sustained consideration of Blake’s prophetic works as well as the parallels he draws between Blake and Whitman.

In many ways, “I celebrate myself” 16 is the most uninhibited iteration of this poem, and so the most politically controversial, sexually explicit, and openly mystical. In 1855, Whitman wrote:

> Shall I pray? Shall I venerate and be ceremonious?
> I have pried through the strata and analyzed to a hair,
> And counselled with doctors and calculated close and found no sweeter fat than sticks to my own bones.
> In all people I see myself, none more and not one a barleycorn less,
> And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them.17

This excerpt highlights Whitman’s disdain—apparent in the tone of the “Shall I…” line—for the religious attitudes of his time. His veneration of humanity and of himself as a part of humanity is also clear in these lines. In this way, Whitman presents the Transcendental view of the primacy of the individual in creating a relationship with God. There are similarities between Transcendentalism and Blakean thought, but they are distinct. Transcendentalism asserts that the existing relationship with God is flawed, while Blake believes that the existing understanding of “the divine” is itself flawed. Blake writes, in his prophetic poem *Jerusalem*: “I must Create a System, or be enslav’d by another Mans/I

(16) It is not until the 1881 edition of *Leaves of Grass* that Whitman came to the title “Song of Myself.” For the purpose of clarity I will refer to each iteration of the poem that would become “Song of Myself” by the title under which Whitman places it in the edition under consideration.

will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create”\textsuperscript{18-19,20}. This well-known excerpt stands as a clear statement of Blake’s view of received ideas—most especially prosody and religion, but extending for Blake into all aspects of his life. Blake is asserting that we are limited in our lives by those ideas which we view as sacrosanct, and that by creating our own understanding of religion and of God, and of what poetry can be and do, humanity can free itself and begin to seek out a more perfect society. In conjunction with this idea, consider this line from Blake’s pamphlet “There Is No Natural Religion”: “God becomes as we are, that we may be as he is”\textsuperscript{21}. Whitman’s “In all people I see myself” seems a reverberation of Blake’s notion. If we extend Blake’s notion that God is as man to allow man to be as God the resultant conclusion is that which Whitman has independently drawn: all of humanity has achieved a divinity. This sentiment, expressed much more explicitly by Blake, is one which can be read as providing an example of these ideological connections between Blake and Whitman.

Politically Whitman and Blake both believe in the significance and necessity of the individual in the proper development of society; a notion which in their times would have been controversial. An example of Whitman’s more politically controversial tendencies in “I celebrate myself” is shown in the following lines: “And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones, / Growing among black folks as among white, / Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, / I give them the same, I receive them the same”\textsuperscript{22}. Grass, Whitman’s great vegetable emblem of democracy, is the subject of these lines. It is Whitman’s “black folks as among white” which might have surprised his nineteenth-century readers, but this is a note that would carry

---


\textsuperscript{19} Blake’s spelling, capitalization, and punctuation often defy convention. I will not alter or make note of these contraventions, rather I will let these stand as artistic choices.

\textsuperscript{20} For ease of reference across editions I refer to Blake’s illuminated works by plate number then line number (P.ln-ln). in the case of his illuminated prose I refer only to the plate number. Blake’s non-illuminated poetry and prose is referenced in conventional format.


through the editions of *Leaves of Grass*, even in the time just before and just after the American Civil War. Blake’s politics, as they are to be understood through his prophetic works, are not as specifically egalitarian as those of Whitman. There is evidence of Blake holding a belief in the individual that resembles that which Whitman asserts throughout *Leaves of Grass*. Blake writes in *Jerusalem*:

> Descend O Lamb of God & take away the imputation of Sin  
> By the Creation of States & the deliverance of Individuals Evermore Amen  
> Thus wept they in Beulah over the Four Regions of Albion  
> But many doubted & despaird & imputed Sin & Righteousness  
> To Individuals & not to States, and these Slept in Ulro.²³

In a tone best understood as sardonic, Blake asserts that religion and the state as a religious institution takes away individual responsibility by imposing a moral system which regards some actions as good and necessary, and some as evil, so forbidden. By making some actions necessary and some forbidden, the freedom of choice is taken away from the individual, and so any act which is meritorious is merely what is expected and any act which is deleterious is merely contrary to expectations. It is the removal of the individual’s agency which Blake seems to be railing against here. Moral schemas imposed by society, to Blake’s thinking, take away the individual’s responsibility for the choices he or she makes. This primacy of the individual is another example of an affinity in ideology between Blake and Whitman.

The final example of an ideological element of Whitman’s poetry which would have pushed readers away from his work in the nineteenth century, Whitman’s less inhibited sexuality, is evinced in the following lines from “I celebrate myself”:

> Is this then a touch? . . . quivering me to a new identity,  
> Flames and ether making a rush for my veins,  
> Treacherous tip of me reaching and crowding to help them,  
> My flesh and blood playing out lightning, to strike what is hardly

---

different from myself,
On all sides prurient provokers stiffening my limbs,
Straining the udder of my heart for its withheld drip,
Behaving licentious toward me, taking no denial,
Depriving me of my best as for a purpose,
Unbuttoning my clothes and holding me by the bare waist,
Deluding my confusion with the calm of the sunlight and pasture fields,
Immodestly sliding the fellow-senses away,
They bribed to swap off with touch, and go and graze at the edges of me,
No consideration, no regard for my draining strength or my anger,
Fetching the rest of the herd around to enjoy them awhile,
Then all uniting to stand on a headland and worry me.\(^{24}\)

These lines represent Whitman’s thinly veiled discussion of the “small death” of self-pleasure. It is at once a discussion of onanism and of the mystical aspect of sexuality, as Whitman understands it. It is by way of this self-pleasure that Whitman is capable of achieving a state through which he transcends the body, and perhaps his sense of individuality. In Blake’s *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* are sentiments which roughly parallel those of Whitman. Blake writes:

The moment of desire! the moment of desire! The virgin
That pines for man; shall awaken her womb to enormous joys
In the secret shadows of her chamber; the youth shut up from
The lustful joy. shall forget to generate. & create an amorous image
In the shadows of his curtains and in the folds of his silent pillow.\(^{25}\)

Evident in these lines is the priority Blake applies to the sexual element of self-realization. Blake is asserting here that the development of sexuality is a necessary element in the development of the individual. Blake is warning against the dangers of onanism. He asserts that sexuality, when repressed, can become misdirected inwards toward the self. Where


Blake is asserting that “lustful joy” without a proper outlet hinders human development, Whitman asserts that “a touch,” to be read as a self-touch, is enough to “quiver” him to a new identity. Blake is forewarning his readers of the hazards of misdirected affection, while Whitman is rhapsodizing on the benefits of onanism, but both of them are willing to write about sexuality in a time when it is largely a taboo subject.

**Anxiety of Influence**

It is evident through the discussion up to this point that the nature of literary influence is complex and convoluted and that of an indirect influence a magnitude greater. An exact measurement of the importance of the works of one author to the works of another is impossible, but the development of this understanding is one of the most useful fields of critical inquiry in the study of transatlantic literature. In this section I briefly outline the critical concepts underlying the idea of influence, and look with more specificity at the idea of transatlantic influence, and how Whitman in particular provides a telling example.

Another idea, central to this argument and to be developed in the future, is an altered and altering view of history and time. Attendant to what I describe as an extended view of history is an enhanced consciousness of one’s place in it. The effect of this is manifestly different in Britain than in America, Weisbuch describes the resultant self-consciousness in the following terms:

> The Anglo-American contest is a struggle between two distinct senses of cultural time, British lateness and American earliness. By cultural time, I mean the collective metaphor that expresses an age’s view of itself in relation to all of history. But it is not only a reflection of an historical attitude; once established, it directs and helps to determine perceptions beyond a strictly historical field.26

British lateness is understood as a feeling that all of the most important things that culture can achieve have already been accomplished. American earliness, on the other hand, is often understood as a concern that there is not enough cultural heritage behind a product to have it

---

achieve anything worthwhile. There is a rather interesting inverse of this that I believe Whitman is taking advantage of. Without the weight of an American cultural inheritance Whitman is free to create as though no one else has ever written a poem. Weisbuch writes, “Cultural earliness allowed Americans to capitalize upon the barrenness of their present scene by considering this barrenness a clearing of the ground for an unprecedented development”\(^27\). It is this realization that allowed Whitman to write a poetry both to and for the American people en masse. With little in the way of a cultural hierarchy to inhibit his writing Whitman is able to mix the everyday and the awesome in a way that he hopes will allow the average reader to connect with his work. This can be understood as a decisive reaction to the literary culture inherited from Britain. But once again, it must be taken at face value that this is a conscious decision on Whitman’s part.

To return to Bloom, and move away from ideas of cultural time, one of the key elements of his ideas in regards to influence is best described as adversarial. Bloom views each writer as wrestling or struggling with a precursor, which is not to say that this struggle is not generative, but Bloom tends to see it in the terms of a battle whereas I am arguing for something more like a compromise. Bloom writes, “The strong poet peers in the mirror of his fallen precursor and beholds neither the precursor nor himself but a Gnostic double, the dark otherness or antithesis that both he and the precursor longed to be, yet feared to become”\(^28\). And this is the potential outcome of a direct influence, this paralyzed realization of all that might have been achieved, but with influences as indirect or separated in time and space as those I plan to engage with it is much more an evaluation of how these writers can made useful. For Whitman it is the “barrenness” or “clearing of the ground” that allows him to consider what each writer he chooses to make use of has achieved successfully and how he, in turn, can adapt that achievement to his end of creating an American poetics. He is granted a freedom to explore literatures from a variety of times and cultures rather than limiting himself to exclusively Anglophone influences. In broader

\(^{27}\) Ibid. 126.
terms Whitman represents a microcosm of what is possible through an influence separated by sufficient time and space. There is of course a difficulty in the notion of “sufficient”, but this vagueness is necessary as each writer will determine this for themselves.

Together with all these ideas—of earliness and lateness and direct and indirect influence—it must be remembered that what Whitman is in pursuit of is a uniquely American poetics; something that is distinctively of America, not as a reaction to British literature but as a result of its being American. Weisbuch writes, “Whitman exemplifies the struggle against history as authority… Whitman’s anxiety of earliness is such that the past is to be known only so that it can be avoided”\textsuperscript{29}. Whitman was anxious to avoid creating work that could be understood as derivative, but he was not beyond making the works of other authors useful to his own work. For Whitman’s own process what this required of him was an amalgamation of these other authors. I mean by this that Whitman believed that a knowledge of the past is only useful as an understanding of that which has already been done; Whitman sought to go through that, to both contain that work and to go beyond it.

This idea of literary influence—direct, indirect, transatlantic, or otherwise—is not to discount the works of individual authors. As Bloom, whose theories often seem to undermine the merit of the individual author, states, “No poem has sources, and no poem merely alludes to another. Poems are written by men, and not by anonymous Splendors”\textsuperscript{30}. This “poems are written by men” is integral to the idea of indirect influence as I posit it. Whitman’s \emph{Leaves of Grass} has sources, and makes allusions, but it is his amalgamation of these often unacknowledged influences that allows me to outline these interconnections between his work and the works of the eighteenth century authors I believe provide the influences that work to connect his work to that of Blake.

I will conclude this discussion of the idea of influence, transatlantic specifically but broadly applicable, with a final quotation from Weisbuch


that provides an understanding key to my argument. Weisbuch writes, “This emphasis on repudiation does not mean that I endorse that view which sees influence invariably as a matter of primal hordes or poets as patricidal... cannibals. Influence is not everywhere contentious and deadly”\(^\text{(31)}\). Although much of what is written about influence takes this view of the late poet as a “patricidal cannibal,” particularly the ideas of Bloom, it is not always necessarily so. The relationship discussed in this paper is tremendously generative.

---