Leaves of Grass as a "Woman's Book"

**Maire Mullins**

**Peer Reviewed**

DOI
10.13008/2153-3695.1380

**Abstract**

Argues that "Leaves can be read as a 'woman's book,' but that this must be done from a different critical perspective than has thus far been taken" and goes on to use the strategies of Helene Cixous to read Whitman's poems, focusing upon "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," "The Sleepers," and Section 11 of "Song of Myself."

**Rights**

Copyright © 1993 Maire Mullins

**Recommended Citation**


Whitman was inspired to write Leaves of Grass based on Ralph Waldo Emerson’s clarion call for a truly American poet who would tell of its glories, virtues and vices. In 1855, Whitman self published a small, slim volume containing twelve poems, which included “Song of Myself” “I Sing the Body Electric” and others which went on to gain immortality. Literary critics severely castigated the book, while poems like “A Woman Waits for Me” and “To A Common Prostitute” were dubbed profane. However, Whitman kept on writing according to his personal dictates and today, Leaves of Grass is seen as echoing the voice and the sentiments of the common man who loves freedom and beauty.