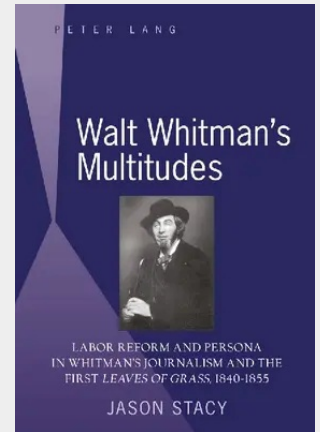


Walt Whitman's Multitudes

Labor Reform and Persona in Whitman's Journalism and the First "Leaves of Grass", 1840-1855

In the fifteen years before the publication of *Leaves of Grass* (1855), Walt Whitman constructed three authoritative voices by which he engaged the upheavals endemic to the Industrial Revolution. Through these public personas, found mostly in his journalism, Whitman offered remedies for American artisans who had lost their economic autonomy and status. Instead of attacking broad forces beyond worker control, Whitman blamed artisans for oppressing themselves through the temptations of consumerism and affectation. *Walt Whitman's Multitudes* places the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* on par with Whitman's journalism and exposes a writer different from most poetry-directed analyses. In doing so, it traces Whitman's public voice as he wrestled intimately with the debates of his day: conspicuous consumption, nativism, slavery, and, through it all, labor and the status of the new working class.

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