
Finding aid prepared by John Anderies on September 28, 2018
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The Untimeliness of the Walt Whitman Exhibition at the New York Public Library: An Open Letter to Trustees," by Charles F. Heartman

Repository: John J. Wilcox, Jr. LGBT Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center
Creator - aut: Heartman, Charles F. (Charles Frederick), 1883-1953
Title: "The Untimeliness of the Walt Whitman Exhibition at the New York Public Library: An Open Letter to Trustees," by Charles F. Heartman
ID: Ms.Coll.66
Date: circa 1925
Physical Description: 1 Volumes
Language of the Material: English
Abstract: Charles F. Heartman's criticism of the New York Public Library's exhibition on the works of Walt Whitman argues that the "obscene" nature of Whitman's poetry should disqualify his works from being presented in a public forum such as an exhibit at the prestigious institution.

Preferred Citation


Biographical / Historical

Charles F. Heartman (1883-1953) was a German immigrant collector, book dealer, and publisher who is best known for championing American literature, establishing hundreds of rare book collections among libraries across the United States. Beginning his American career in New York City, Heartman moved his operations several times over the course of his life, making homes in Vermont, New Jersey, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. In Mississippi Heartman and his wife attempted to found a "book farm," a utopian community of writers, artists, and intellectuals. While he may have associated with a educated and creative crowd in his personal and business pursuits he nevertheless seems to have drawn the line at public expressions of same-sex love and attraction, as this 1925 pamphlet makes clear.
Called "An Open Letter to the Trustees," Charles F. Heartman's criticism of the New York Public Library's exhibition on the works of Walt Whitman argues that the "obscene" nature of Whitman's poetry should disqualify his works from being presented in a public forum such as an exhibit at the prestigious institution. Sixty copies of the privately printed pamphlet were released in advance of the text appearing in the American Collector (v. 1, no. 3 (Dec. 1925)), a monthly magazine about book collecting edited by Heartman himself. The pamphlet—a saddle stitched booklet of 5 numbered pages—includes a photograph of "Walt Whitman and his 'friend' Peter Doyle" and contains both Heartman's impassioned letter to the library trustees as well as an ensuing "personal statement."
Controlled Access Headings

- Gay erotic poetry, American
- Library exhibits -- Censorship
- New York Public Library
- Whitman, Walt, 1819-1892