

WALT
WHITMAN

POETRY
AND PROSE

edited by
ABE ČAPEK

EVEN SEAS BOOKS

Briefly,

ABOUT THE BOOK

The editions of WALT WHITMAN that have found their way to the bookshelves of the world are legion. However, the current Panther Books edition not only presents the work of the American poet in new dress, it also introduces writings which are new to Whitman collections: poetry and prose which have been kept in libraries and in archives, in official and in private collections.

No single volume can hold all of what the poet wrote and the current edition does not pretend to do so. Its aim has been best expressed by its editor, Abe Čapek, who stated:

What I hope for is that this collection will make all who read it—the student and the poetry-lover, and even the casual turner-of-pages—want to read more and more Whitman. For, in reading Whitman, one comes to know not only poetry that reaches the heart, but a love of mankind, a belief in man the doer and worker, and a faith in the comradeship of all the peoples of the earth.

SEVEN SEAS BOOKS

A Collection of Works by Writers in the English Language



WALT WHITMAN · POETRY AND PROSE

Edited by Abe Čapek

WALT WHITMAN

POETRY AND PROSE

Edited

with an Introduction and Notes

by

ABE ČAPEK

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

NO POET of a century ago has exerted as great an influence on the development of modern poetry as Walt Whitman. Despite the oneness between poetry and the language in which it is created—the frequently untranslatable element in poetry—Whitman's poetic influence has ranged far beyond the English-language poets.

Democratic poets in France, Germany, Spain, Latin America, the Soviet Union, China, India, Czechoslovakia and Turkey, writing in the most diverse languages and national literary traditions, have hailed Whitman as a forerunner or reflected his influence in their work. And the entire realistic tradition in American literature, in prose as well as poetry, has been nourished by Whitman.

Despite the universal recognition of Whitman's stature as an American classic of world literature we still do not have a collected edition of his complete writings. *LEAVES OF GRASS*, his poetic life work, is available in numerous editions, popular and deluxe. There are also a number of different editions of his poetry and selected prose. But much of Whitman's writings still remains inaccessible to the general reader.

This is not the fault of the Whitman scholars who in the years since Whitman's death have tracked down, studied and published a great many Whitman manuscripts now dispersed in an extensive, almost formidable, Whitman literature. Emory Holloway, the dean of American Whitman scholars, has devoted a lifetime to Whitman research and every student of Whitman owes a debt to Holloway and his various volumes of Whitman collections.

Holloway and others have collected a good part of Whitman's extensive journalistic writings which have been published in book form at different times by different publishers. But to this day we do not have all

of Whitman's journalistic writings and articles in an accessible form. The late Clifton Joseph Furness contributed a revealing collection of formerly unpublished Whitman manuscripts described elsewhere in this anthology. New Whitman manuscripts keep appearing from time to time in specialized publications and as late as January, 1956, we find in the journal *American Literature* a request from Emory Holloway for information concerning extant files of the *Washingtonian and Organ* for 1843 and the *New York Sunday Times* for 1842 to 1846 to help him in his quest for some still unknown temperance tales by Whitman.

The U.S. Library of Congress possesses the most extensive collection of Whitman manuscripts housed in any single institution but it published a catalog of this material, for the first time, only last year. Catalogs of other important collections of Whitman manuscripts and materials have also been published only recently: the Charles E. Feinberg collection by the Detroit Public Library in 1955 and the Oscar Lion Collection by the New York Public Library in 1953. This slowly improving state of affairs has long served as a barrier between the general reader and a significant part of Whitman's writings and imposes hardships and obstacles on the anthologist and student of Whitman.

The unnecessarily scattered state of Whitman's writings more than a century after the appearance of the first edition of *LEAVES OF GRASS* and well over half a century after the poet's death—the absence of a complete works of Whitman despite the fact that American publishers have issued the complete works of many lesser American and British writers—is a reflection of the century of hostility that Whitman has encountered from an influential sector of the literary critics in the United States. As Waldo Frank pointed out in the feature article of *The New York Times Book Review* on the 100th anniversary of the first edition of *LEAVES OF GRASS*: