

redemption narrative distinct from its antislavery origins and which lends its voice to those left “articulat[ing] the most extravagant claims of national regeneration.” However, when examined as a rhetoric beyond the intentional thrust of an antislavery discourse of redemption—that is, when examined through the dialectical process of Grant’s analysis—Whitman’s prospective politics (and enjoining rhetoric) become devoid of any such “claims of natural regeneration.” Instead, Grant allows them to exist in a rhetorical field populated by “claims” ironically emptied of rhetorical necessity. Despite these challenges, David Grant’s work offers an invigorating and complex set of political and aesthetic interrogations of Whitman’s poetic output which ask us to reconsider and take seriously the poet’s relationship with Republican discourse. In taking such a possibility seriously, however, we must consider whether the use of rhetorical tropes that are perpendicular to a certain discursive arena—through a noteworthy and all-too-emphasized and equivocal distance and proximity—may yet leave the rhetorician both buried in its trappings and inadvertently free from more radical, even conservative, poetic potential.

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WALT WHITMAN. *Lebenseiche, moosbehangen. Live Oak, with Moss*, translated and edited by Heinrich Detering. Aachen: Rimbaud, 2021. 70pp.

Heinrich Detering, professor of Modern German and Comparative Literature Studies at Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, has worked, or is working on, a variety of topics, including ecocritical and gay literature, and the writings of Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Mann, Bertolt Brecht, and Günter Grass. A poet himself, he is also a translator who has rendered Bob Dylan’s poems and prose into German. Now he has come out with a small but interesting bilingual edition of a cycle of Whitman’s poems that until recently was primarily known only to Whitman specialists.

*Live Oak, with Moss* is a cycle of twelve manuscript poems headed with Roman numerals which are part of University of Virginia Valentine-Barrett collection. It includes such poems as those Whitman would later entitle “I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing,” “What Think you I take my Pen in Hand to Record” and “When I Heard at the Close of the Day,” that center on the poet’s emotional relationship with another man. Whitman at one point probably considered this work an integral whole to be published in that format and order.

considered this work an integral whole to be published in that format and order. For reasons unknown, however, he never published the sequence and instead included the poems, with some changes and in a completely different order—including the omission of two poems, “Hours continuing long, sore and heavy-hearted” and “Long I thought that knowledge alone would suffice me”—in the new “Calamus” section of the third edition of *Leaves of Grass* in 1860. This has led to a discussion over whether Whitman possibly “censored” his lyrical coming out by diluting the homoerotic plot of the *Live Oak, with Moss* into the larger “Calamus.”

The bilingual edition presented by Detering contains not only the original texts and the translations, but (also bilingual) variants of and annotations on the text, as well as a commentary characterizing the speaker of these poems as a “highly nuanced and manifold persona, . . . less aimed at external representation than at intimate subjectivity . . . a longing, loving and desiring individual named Walt Whitman.” Emphasizing that “in the density and brevity of the sequence” of these poems “Whitman’s amorous protagonists go beyond the borders of the human species,” the plant symbolism (including its botanical title) leads to an “equally erotic and environmental poetry, erotic poetry that is also environmental”: “The trees, the landscapes and the embraces, the wanderers and the words, they all prove to be protagonists of a sole indestructible network in the poetic-erotic ecology of Whitman’s sequence.” In order to show “how the rhizome of relations inexorably branches out until finally it has encompassed all poems,” Detering adds five poems from later editions of *Leaves*, including “Are You the New Person Drawn toward Me?” and “To Him That was Crucified.”

Detering’s translation brings across the intimacy and passion of these poems. By de-capitalizing German nouns, oftentimes a marker for experimentality in German poetry and literature at large, the poetic text here becomes more private and coherent. Whereas German nouns normally stand out, here they contribute to the cycle’s erotic universalism. The translation also uses male-gendered versions of words like “friend” and “lover,” which are grammatically gender-neutral in English, to emphasize the homoerotic quality of these poems. Even in places where a more universal word might be suitable, Detering tends to use gendered language, as when using “Mann” (male) for “man” where Hans Reisiger’s translation, *Walt Whitmans Werk* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1922)—which equally stressed the male-sexual dimension of Whitman’s poetry—used the word “Mensch” (human being). On the lexical level, there are a few—but not many—significant semantic variations, for example when “robust friends” become “inseparable friends” (“unzertrennliche Freunde”).

The book is volume 132 of a series called “Lyrik-Taschenbuch” (poetry

paperback) published by Rimbaud publishers in Aachen, a city at the border triangle of Germany, Belgium, and France. Rimbaud's publishing record—some 600 titles since 1981—reflects its location at a central European intersection. Obviously, there are Modernist (or pre-modernist) authors like Rimbaud himself, or Ezra Pound, García Lorca, and Marianne Moore. There is an amazing series of more than 100 volumes of writers, mostly poets, from the Bukovina, a historical region at the extremely dynamic border between Eastern and Central Europe (Mitteleuropa), with Czernovitz (Chernivtsi) as its literary capital. Situated at the Eastern outskirts of the Hapsburg Empire, later in an uncertain tension between Romania and the Ukraine, Bukovina authors, most of them Jewish, often are, or should be, part of the world literary canon: headed by literary personalities such as Paul Celan, Rose Ausländer, and Aharon Appelfeld, there is much that can be discovered in this collection and in Rimbaud's many other literary worlds.

This extraordinary publishing firm, one of whose areas of specialty is gay literature, also focuses on a select group of nineteenth-century authors who were modern even in their own time: Goethe, of course, Heinrich Heine, and Georg Büchner among the Germans and—Walt Whitman. In 2011, Rimbaud published a bilingual Whitman volume entitled *Liebesgedichte—Love Poems*, which is now in its third edition. It assembles poems fitting this very flexible category from the “Calamus” and “Children of Adam” series, along with a number of others. The title of this collection alone forces one to rethink Whitman's poetry, since the author himself never used the generic term “love poetry,” and the collection thwarts the differentiation into two variants, “homosexual” and “heterosexual.” The polarizing categories are abolished: all you need is love. The translator, Frank Schablewski, a poet himself, calls his work a “literary adaption” rather than a translation—more explicit than Reisiger, but also more willing to depart from the monosemantic paths.

If one of the largest German publishing firms, Hanser, has done German Whitman readers the favor of publishing the first complete, though monolingual, German version of the deathbed edition, Rimbaud is proving to be an innovative new German home for Whitman's work that is located outside the Deathbed Edition. The firm is already planning its next two Whitman books—the first German translation of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* and a new edition of *Specimen Days*, last published in the German Democratic Republic in 1985. The multitudes Whitman contains are beginning to be opened up to German readers.