

Journal Review

Jorge R. Sagastume, ed. *Sirena: Poesía, arte, y crítica/Poetry, Art and Criticism*. Carlisle, PA: Department of Spanish and Portuguese, Dickinson College, 2004. 165 pages. \$13 annual subscription price.

Sirena is a new journal of poetry and criticism published by the department of Spanish and Portuguese at Dickinson College. I was first made aware of it by a notice in the April 16, 2003 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. A major purpose of the journal is to publish all poetry and criticism in the original language. In the case of critical articles, *Sirena* publishes those articles in the original language only, so an article submitted in Spanish will appear online in Spanish. For poetry, all submissions are published in the original language first and then translated into either English (if the original language was Spanish, or translated into Spanish (if the original language was English)). In the case of the original poem being in a language other than Spanish or English, that poem will be translated into both of those languages. In other words, all poetry appears in either bilingual or trilingual translations.

The journal, then, does double duty: its critical articles require that the reader be able to read the original language of the article while its published poetry can be enjoyed by anyone who reads Spanish or English. Particularly since poems submitted in a third language are translated into both Spanish and English, the poetry selections in a third language become a study in the translator's art. The poems that appear in trilingual translations are an especially interesting comparative study; the poems themselves become more deeply textured through their appearance in three languages. In this inaugural issue two poets, Michael Augustin and Marion Pickett, wrote original in German; their poems appear in both Spanish and English translations.

Other poets who appear in this inaugural issue, with the original language their poems in parentheses, are: Sujata Bhatt (English), Adrienne Su (English), Ana Merino (Spanish), Juan Manuel Villalba (Spanish), Vanessa Droz (Spanish), and Noel Luna (Spanish). The countries of origin for this eclectic gathering of poets include India, the United States, Spain, Germany, and Puerto Rico.

The only article of literary criticism in this first issue of *Sirena* is by Noel Luna, who teaches literature at the University of Puerto Rico. His article "*Veinte años no es nada*" ("Twenty Years Is Nothing") is about the Puerto Rican poet Vanessa Droz. Luna stresses that one of the strengths of Droz's poetry is her ability to make the reader participate actively in its (re-)creation. After quoting an apt passage from her poetry he admits: "Confieso que me gustaría haber escrito estos versos. ¿No es ése el efecto que busca la buena literatura?" ("I confess that I would have liked to have written these lines. Isn't that the effect that good literature strives for?").

Sirena means “mermaid” in Spanish and is an apt name for a journal emanating from Dickinson College since a mermaid weathervane stands atop Old West, the original 1803 Dickinson building. This issue is illustrated with whimsical line drawings by one of its featured poets, Michael Augustin. The only serious printing problem I found with this first issue is the unfortunate fact that the table of contents got ten pages ahead of itself from page 116 onwards, a misprint that will cause few serious problems for readers of the journal.

A literary critical journal of this nature should be welcome by international educators in the United States since it at once expects its readers to negotiate a language other than English. In an increasingly globalized world is it important for the typically monoglot American audience to be reminded that serious intellectual endeavors are conducted in other languages besides English. At the same time, the policy of presenting all poetry bilingually or trilingually creates a multi-faceted literary gem for a wide audience.

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