

# The New Criterion

Poems June 2023

## Sweet longing (a translation)

by Dylan Carpenter

### Sweet longing

by *Alfredo Espino*

Those times were like a story . . .  
In the bright garden, blossoming St. Andrew's Cross  
filled the soft silence of my home with gold,  
and clear stars shivered in the basin.

At that time I thought the world was a grand garden  
of flowers and basins dotted with points of light.  
I watched the mountains and believed they were enormous  
backs, shouldering the domed sky.

Once, before the Virgin of Sorrows,  
in the quiet half-light of my warm room,  
I lit a candle . . . I wished for a miracle: coins  
to appear suddenly in my little wooden chest.

And I was so upset  
when I saw the pale Virgin's eyes bitter and wet,  
but I begged and begged her for forgiveness  
when, later, mischievously, I killed a bird.

The charm went away . . . it went away . . . blurred.  
It went away blurring that time that seemed like a story.  
Life was no garden with flowers and basins,  
and I didn't ask the Virgin for any more miracles.

At fifteen, I remember when I read her name  
it made me sick for days,  
and I shed more than a few tears.  
I nursed a sad desire to be like Ephraim.

These memories come through my open window.  
Oh my hushed garden, murmurous with birds  
and the humble window whose square framed  
a piece of the sky, which I pretended  
was a magnificent blue scrap of cloth.

*—translated from the Spanish by Dylan Carpenter*

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