

María Teresa Andruetto

Muchacha de Ucrania/2003

¿Cómo van en tu tierra las cosas?, pregunto.
Siempre peor, me responde, es toda una mafia.
Mi prima allá abajo levanta la mano. La chica
se llama Alexandra y va a trabajar a Gerona.
Tiene a su padre en Valencia y a su madre limpiando
un albergue en Milano.

Su hermano,
que cumple catorce, se ha quedado en Ucrania
cuidando la casa. Hablo tres lenguas, me dice,
ucraniano, moldavo y rumano, pero eso no sirve
en España. En el bus van gitanos, letones y húngaros,
y esta chica que tiene a su madre en Milano.
También va una mujer de Trujillo que no tiene
papeles, me lo dijo comprando el pasaje. Hay
un sitio mejor y está lejos.

*(Por la tarde
he llamado a mis hijas.
No estaban.)*

Yo quería quedarme
cuidando la casa, me dice la chica de Ucrania,
pero es mejor que se quede mi hermano.
Conversando, he olvidado que estoy todavía
en Torino, que el bus no ha arrancado,
que mi prima allá abajo levanta
la mano.

María Teresa Andruetto (Arroyo Cabral, Argentina, 1954) has published novels, essays, short stories, children's books and several poetry volumes. Her fiction, translated into several languages, has been the subject of several graduate and doctorate dissertations. She is the recipient of many awards, including the Hans Christian Andersen Award 2012.

María Teresa Andruetto translated by Laura Chalar

Ukrainian girl/2003

How are things in your country?
I ask. Bad to worse, she answers,
it's all mafia. My cousin down there
raises her hand. The girl is called Alexandra
and going to work in Gerona. She has a father
in Valencia and a mother who cleans
a hostel in Milan.

Her brother,
who's turning fourteen, has stayed in Ukraine
minding the house. I speak three languages, she says,
Ukrainian, Moldavian and Romanian, but that's no use
to me in Spain. On the bus there are gypsies, Latvians
and Hungarians, and this girl whose mother is
in Milan. There's also an undocumented woman
from Trujillo — she told me that while buying
her ticket. There's a better place
and it's far away.

*(In the afternoon
I called my daughters.
They weren't home.)*

I wanted to stay home
minding the house, the Ukrainian girl tells me,
but it's better if my brother does it.
Chatting, I've forgotten that I'm still
in Turin, that the bus hasn't started,
that my cousin down there is raising
her hand.

Laura Chalar's (Montevideo, Uruguay, 1976) latest short story and poetry collections, respectively, are *The Guardian Angel of Lawyers* (Roundabout Press, 2018) and *Unlearning* (Coal City Press, 2018). She also writes for children, most recently *The Paving Stone Man* (Planeta, Uruguay, 2020). Her translations from and into Spanish are widely published.