

Aranda, Pablo. *Ucrania*. Barcelona: Destino, 2006.
288 páginas. ISBN: 8423338843.

Distinguishing himself from popular journalistic and testimonial rhetoric frequently employed in recent Spanish narrative about immigration, Pablo Aranda reconstructs the global movement of people beyond current events. More interestingly, this narrative touches on the intimate spaces to which individuals are connected, revealing an uncanny experience between immigrants and Spaniards. Jorge, a young working-class Malagueñan meets a Ukrainian woman, Elena, from an online dating service. He agrees to marry her once in Málaga, thereby permitting her to live and work legally in Spain. Elena's presence, her "warm body," permeates his bedroom/world ultimately producing Jorge's sense of belonging in the real world, and therefore permits him to abandon the fictional world of the film posters which adorn his bedroom walls. Still, for each character, "home" is constituted differently. Elena's "home" is her son in the Ukraine, rather than the material place where he and her mother live. Similarly, Jorge's high school friend, Laura, as a Spanish nurse living in London with her English boyfriend, must remake a home space, but eventually tires of the drudgery involved in recreating one's life in a foreign land. Jorge's story, alongside those of the characters in the novel, reflect a new global Andalusia where the phenomena of *asaltos a chalets* (armed-robbery of upper middle-class houses usually perpetrated by immigrants connected to Eastern European mafias), the contemporary emigration of educated Spaniards to northern European countries, and the significance of cybercafés in

transnational communication and virtual intimacy are now commonplace. *Ucrania* is a jewel among a number of texts that have ignored those intimate dimensions. This novel compels us to contemplate how the presence of outsiders in our homes actually affects us: how much of our notion of “hearth and home” is contingent on someone outside ourselves.

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