El gallinero
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**I think this is an excellent book. As the author explains in a note at the end, it deals with a group of children living in a slum within Greater Madrid, Cañada Real, which is the largest slum in Europe. It is narrated in the first person by one of these children, who imagines that everyone around him is taking part in a great circus: the games of the children and the everyday activities of the adults are re-imagined as circus acts, whereby each person engages in feats of magic for the entertainment of all the others. The book thereby takes a difficult reality and turns it into a dreamscape of sorts.**

**The strength of the book lies in the fact that, while it deals with very serious and indeed difficult subject matter, it does so in a way that, in my view, foregrounds the narrative aspects and even the beauty of the story; as such, I think children will be able to relate to it, learning all the while that they are entertained. The story is told not only through words but also through large, beautiful images, each of which takes up two facing pages of the book. Given the size of these images, and the skill of the artist, children will be able to spend a time examining the details of their favorite drawings, looking at what each of the children is doing, finding interesting elements in the background, etc.; I would go so far as to say that each image is a story in and of itself.**

**The book might pose slight difficulties for children who are extremely sensitive, given the sometimes difficult subject matter; one of the images, for instance, depicts children playing with dead rats and throwing syringes at a board as if for target practice. These elements are necessary, however, to give an accurate portrayal of the lives of these children. Furthermore, these images somehow succeed in conveying hope, since the children, far from living lives of continuous misery, find ways of making the best of their situation, using what are usually considered objects of detritus in their games.**

**The images alternate in a very interesting way between such depictions of reality and those that portray the fantasy lives of the children. One such image imagines the children putting on a stage performance before large machines whom they imagine to be their spectators. Another portrays the narrator's mother floating through the air, with only the sky as the background: the accompanying text explains that she is seeking "to reach a slice of the moon"—i.e., something that would transcend her daily reality.**

**I think this text is very suitable for translation. It is written in a simple yet engaging way that lends itself to being translated. I believe the subject matter will travel well in the United States because the book depicts near-universal realities: as the author states in her note at the end of the book, a third of the world's urban population lives in slums, and**

**many American children, even those who are well off, are likely to have seen and wondered about children living in poor conditions. There are also many children of Latin American origin in the United States, who have likely heard stories from their parents or grandparents about precisely the kinds of places depicted in the book. It may be interesting for them, and for their parents as well, to learn that such places also exist in Europe.**

**In short, the book deals with a topical theme in a compelling and original way. I think it would make for a great translation.**