

# LA CUESTA DE MOYANO

## KM 0 LITERARIO DE MADRID

### ILUSTRADO CULTURAL MAP



ES

MADRID

KILOMÉTRE O  
LITERARIO  
MADRID'S  
KM 0 LITERARIO  
DE MOYANO

AN ILLUSTRATED CULTURAL MAP  
ILLUSTRADO  
CULTURAL  
MAPA

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# LA CUESTA DE MOYANO

Madrid tiene su icónico Kilómetro 0 en la Puerta del Sol, pero además tiene otro punto de partida no muy lejos, en la Cuesta de Moyano. Su treintena de casetas en gris azulado han visto, y aún son testigo, del afán lector de estudiantes, literatos, académicos, chiquillos, políticos, artistas. Y, sobre todo, anónimos a millones que tras recorrer por primera vez este hermoso espacio libreresco, se enamoran de su encanto magnético y ya lo incorporan a su cartografía personal madrileña.

La "Feria de la que han salido libros para todos los rincones del mundo" y que "ha sido visitada por todo el mundo", como bien describió uno de sus últimos grandes libreros, el querido Pepe Berchi, es la mayor congregación estable de librerías al aire libre de Europa. El concepto original de Moyano como Km 0 de los libros se atribuye a otro de sus ilustres amantes y Socio de Honor de la asociación ciudadana 'Soy de la Cuesta', el escritor y periodista Antonio Lucas.

Ese entusiasmo por los relatos es el que guía como una brújula lectora este Mapa Cultural Ilustrado que es un mapa de aventuras, de poemas, de relatos escondidos entre las acacias madrileñas y los tejados de teja de la vieja Villa.

Como anfitriones perfectos, nos llevan de la mano Andrés Trapiello y Fernando Vicente. Pónganse calzado cómodo y échense a las calles madrileñas que vamos a recorrer como si fueran los renglones torcidos de un libro que relata la historia literaria de Madrid.

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Madrid may well have its iconic Kilometre 0 in the Puerta del Sol, but it also has another point of departure not all that far away, on the Cuesta de Moyano. The thirty or so bluish-grey stalls have been, and still are, witness to myriad students, writers, academics, children, politicians, thinkers and artists, all in search of a good book to read. And, above all, to millions of anonymous visitors who, after wandering through this beautiful literary space for the first time, have fallen in love with its irresistible charm and have already added it to their personal map of Madrid.

The "Fair from which books have flown to the furthest corners of the world" and which "everyone has visited", in the words of one of its last great booksellers, the much-loved Pepe Berchi, is the largest stable congregation of open-air bookshops in Europe. The original idea of Moyano as the Kilometre Zero of books is attributed to another of its illustrious admirers and an Honorary Member of the 'Soy de la Cuesta' citizens' association, writer and journalist Antonio Lucas.

This enthusiasm for storytelling is the guiding force behind this illustrated Cultural Map, which is filled with adventures, poems, and stories hidden between Madrid's acacias and the tiles that adorn the roofs of the old town.

As the perfect hosts that they are, Andrés Trapiello and Fernando Vicente lead us by the hand. So, put on a pair of comfortable shoes and step out onto the streets of Madrid: we'll stroll through them as if they were the crooked lines of a book that tells the literary history of Madrid.

## LA CUESTA DE MOYANO, KM 0 LITERARIO MADRID'S LITERARY KILOMETRE 0

Texto Text: Andrés Trapiello

**U**na ciudad se parece mucho a un palimpsesto. Debajo de lo que se ve hay más. En parte eso es lo que sucede en la **Cuesta de Moyano** (1), el kilómetro cero literario de esta ciudad. Alguien tuvo la idea en 1924: como París, Madrid tendría buquinistas, libreros de viejo al aire libre. Hasta entonces Madrid era solo una ciudad a medias, pues cuantos los buscan saben muy bien que a menudo los libros viejos dicen más y mejor de nosotros que los nuevos, y hasta que no leemos los viejos no estaremos completos como lectores.

Sabiendo esto está uno ya en disposición de seguir por la calle de Atocha arriba hasta encontrar la casa donde estuvo la imprenta de Robles (2). En ella se imprimió el *Quijote*, que habla de cómo la vida nos rompe a todos y cómo la literatura nos ayuda a juntar los trozos. Ese caserón estuvo en ruinas hasta hace cincuenta años, o sea, otro trozo también sin restaurar.



Al lado, a dos pasos, en la calle de Lope de Vega, esquina con la del León, está también la última casa de Cervantes, donde murió, y la de Lope está en la calle de Cervantes (3). Un lío. La original de Cervantes la tiraron en el siglo XIX y levantaron otra en su lugar. La de Lope, en cambio, es en parte la original del siglo XVII. Y lo que no es original, da muy bien el tono de la época, los aposentos, los estrados y muebles y, sobre todo, su pequeño jardín. Lope lo describió con unos versos preciosos: «más leve que cometa, / tiene sólo dos árboles, diez flores, / dos parras, un naranjo, una mosqueta. / Aquí los muchachos ruseñores»... Lope se rió del pobre Cervantes, de sus anteojos, de su *Quijote*. Ya ha dicho uno alguna vez que de existir en aquel tiempo, el primer premio Cervantes se lo habrían dado a Lope.

El Viaducto (7) fue a Madrid lo que la torre Eiffel a París. Con esto está dicho todo. Hubo un viaducto viejo, que se construyó en 1874, con hierros atornillados. Se desmontó y se hizo el nuevo, de hormigón, en 1934, el actual. Fue desde el primer momento el que escogieron los suicidas y acaso por eso mismo, el preferido también de los van-

guardistas españoles, Ramón Gómez de la Serna a la cabeza. Este se lo tomaba casi todo a risa, suicidas y muertos incluidos, a los que dedicó muchas de sus joyosas piruetas literarias. No así el principal contrincante de Ramón en el papado de la vanguardia, Rafael Cansinos-Assens. Cansinos, el maestro de Borges, habló de ese Viaducto viejo en otro tono. Vivió media vida cerca de allí, en uno de los barrios viejos más bonitos de Madrid, el de la morería (8). Cansinos, que se decía judío, parecía un nazari, sabio y melancólico.

Todos ellos fueron unos románticos póstumos. Véase, si no, el Museo del Romanticismo (9) (de él escribió unas páginas estupendas Ortega y Gasset): el romanticismo es lo que vuelve, como las golondrinas de Bécquer.

Y por eso nadie tan romántico como los modernos inquilinos de la Residencia de Estudiantes (10), acaso el lugar más aristocrático de la modernidad madrileña: Lorca, Buñuel, Dalí y con ellos toda la generación del 27. Jóvenes y privilegiados, talentosos y un poco snobs si hacía falta, al modo oxoniente (ese era el modelo de su director, el gran don Alberto Jiménez Fraud).

Combatieron entonces a Juan Ramón Jiménez, otro de sus inquilinos y quien bautizó ese lugar como la Colina de los Chopos, pero sucedió de ese modo porque, como dijo uno de ellos, Ramón Gaya, «le debían demasiado».

A Juan Ramón no le quedó otra que apartarse de todos. Sólo se le veía, paseando, solitario, en el Retiro (11), tal vez el lugar más literario de Madrid, y no porque haya allí algunas estatuas de escritores (la más bonita, la de Galdós, y la única que se echa en falta la de JRJ, precisamente).

También lo frecuentó mucho, en sus últimos años, el novelista Pío Baroja, camino de la Cuesta de Moyano, de la que era asiduo. Vivió este sus últimos años a dos pasos de la Real Academia Española (12), de la que formaba parte. Pese a ello no iba nunca a sus sesiones, dando mal ejemplo. El edificio tiene un bonito empaque neoclásico de finales del siglo XIX y, aunque cuenta con una gran biblioteca, acostumbran los académicos ir mucho a la cercana Cuesta de Moyano para estirar las piernas y homenajear a don Pío, cuya estatua domina las casetas de los libreros como un intrépido capitán de barco, de pie, sobre un mar de libros viejos.

Y así, donde empezó, concluye este mapa circular. De Madrid han hablado mejor que nadie sus escritores. Mirad las casas que fueron suyas, sus calles y jardines. Basta observar con atención para verlos emerger de nuevo, como en un palimpsesto.



Pérez Galdós is not more than Cervantes, but nor is he less than him. The Cava de San Miguel (5) boasts the house in which Galdós placed Fortunata, the main character of his *Fortunata y Jacinta*, a creature who gave everything for a love as absolute as it was unrequited. A few months ago they put up a plaque: "Fortunata lived here". This is only half true, however, because unlike her dearly departed author, Fortunata is still alive.

Which is more than can be said about Mariano José de Larra, whose life was all too short. The *enfant terrible* of Romanticism and Spanish literature's most famous suicide, he put a bullet in his head when he was twenty-seven years old, but not before he had sorted out his manuscripts, leaving this verse by Boileau for all to see: "With today's nonsense I distil my bile". The house in which he put paid to his days, on Calle de Santa Clara (6), is in a neighbourhood close to the Royal Palace, which preserves the peaceful and provincial air of 19th century Madrid, just a stone's throw from the Viaduct.

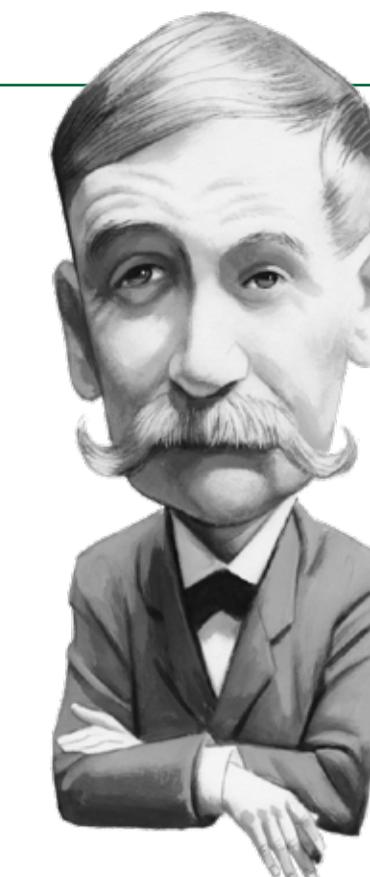
The Viaduct (7) was to Madrid what the Torre Eiffel was to Paris. That says it all. Before this one, a riveted iron girder viaduct had been built in 1874 but they tore it down and built this new concrete viaduct in its place in 1934. Right from the start, it became the favourite choice of anyone intent on committing suicide, which is perhaps why it was also the favourite haunt of the Spanish avant-garde, with Ramón Gómez de la Serna at the head. Nearly everything was a joke as far as he was concerned, including suicides and the dead, to whom he dedicated many of his joyful literary pirouettes. Not so Ramón's main sparring partner for the avant-garde papacy, Rafael Cansinos-Assens. Cansinos, Borges' master, spoke of that old Viaduct in a different tone. He lived near there for half his life, in one of Madrid's most beautiful old quarters, the Morería or the Moorish Quarter (8). Cansinos, who claimed to be a Jew, looked more like a Nasrid, rather wise and melancholic.

Knowing this, one is now well placed to continue along the Calle de Atocha as far as the house where the Robles printing works (2) once stood. It was here that *Don Quixote* was printed, a book that talks about how life breaks us all apart, and how literature helps us to put the pieces back together again. That ramshackle old house was in ruins until about fifty years ago, another piece left unhealed.

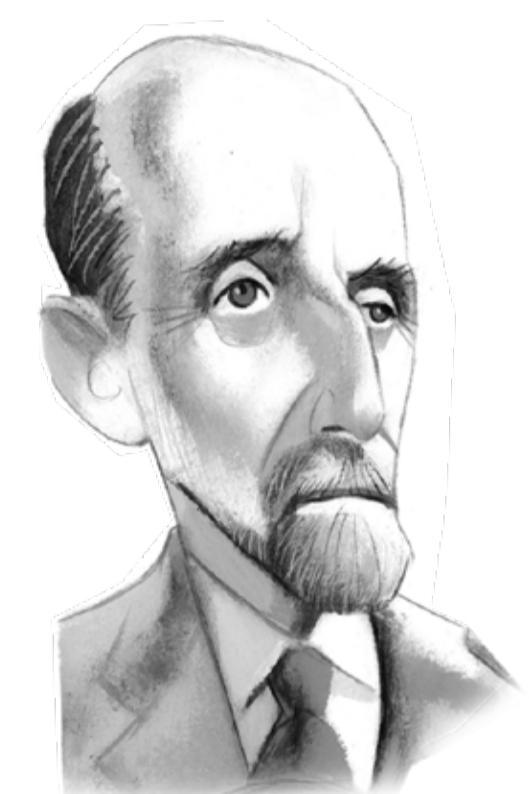
Cervantes' last house, the one he died in, is nearby, just a few steps away in fact, in Calle de Lope de Vega, where it intersects with Calle del León. Lope de Vega's house meanwhile, is on Calle de Cervantes (3). Confusing? Cervantes' original house was demolished in the 19th century and another built in its place. Lope's, however, is the original from the 17th century, or at least part of it. The parts that aren't original are very much in keeping with the period, however, the rooms, the podiums and the furniture and, above all, the small garden. Lope described it in a few beautiful lines: "lighter than a comet, / it has only two trees, ten flowers, / two vines, an orange tree, a rosehip bush. / Here come the nightingale boys"... Lope liked having a go at poor Cervantes, at his spectacles, at his *Don Quixote*. Someone once said that if the Cervantes Prize had existed at that time, it would have gone to Lope.

The church of the Trinitarian nuns (4) stands opposite Lope's house. This is where Cervantes was buried, although they're still looking for his bones. He would surely have had a thing or two to say about this rather humorous and Cervantine fact. Lope's bones, on the other hand, will never turn up again. Poetic justice, no doubt. This entire neighbourhood, where Quevedo, Góngora and numerous actors also lived, was once known as the neighbourhood of the Muses. It's now called the Literary Quarter, perhaps because one thing time does well is cut us all down to size.

When you leave this area, heading up towards the Plaza Mayor, you're entering Galdós' territory. It takes ten minutes on foot. Don Benito



They fought the piece out with Juan Ramón Jiménez, another tenant who in fact christened it the Hill of the Poplars, but, as Ramón Goya who was one of them admitted, that animosity existed because "they owed him so much".



Juan Ramón was left with no choice but to ignore them all. He was only ever to be seen strolling, on his own, in El Retiro Park (11), perhaps the most literary place in Madrid, and not just because there are quite a few statues of writers there (the most beautiful being that of Galdós, and the only one missing being precisely that of JRJ).

In his final years, the novelist Pío Baroja also loved to stroll through the Retiro on his way to the Cuesta de Moyano, where he was a regular. His home during those last years of his life was just a short walk from the Royal Spanish Academy (12), of which he was a member. Despite his proximity to the Academy, however, he never attended its sessions, setting a rather bad example. The building has a beautiful late 19th-century neoclassical feel to it, and although it houses a large library, academics are wont to slip away to the nearby Cuesta de Moyano to stretch their legs and pay homage to Don Pío, whose statue towers over the booksellers' booths and stalls like an intrepid ship's captain standing amidst a sea of old books.

And so, where it began, this circular map comes to an end. No-one has spoken so well of Madrid as its writers. Look at the houses that were once theirs, their streets and gardens. If you look carefully, you will see them emerge once again, as on a palimpsest.



They were all posthumous romantics. If you don't agree, check out the Museum of Romanticism (9) (Ortega y Gasset dedicated a few wonderful pages to it): Romanticism is what always returns, like Bécquer's swallows.

And that's why there's no-one quite as romantic as the more modern tenants of the Residencia de Estudiantes halls of residence (10), perhaps the most aristocratic place in Madrid's modernist movement: Lorca, Buñuel, Dalí and with them, the entire generation of '27. They were young and privileged, talented and, if it was de rigueur, a little snobbish in the Oxonian way (the model followed by their director, the great Don Alberto Jiménez Fraud).



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