





# ALATRISTE

Captain Alatrisme's Spain was a harsh, violent and dark Spain. Yet it was also a country where many great things were happening. In a small area of Madrid, for instance, one could find the greatest concentration of literary talent in the world, for the likes of Lope, Calderón, Cervantes, Quevedo, Góngora and Ruiz de Alarcón, to name a few, all lived in the same neighbourhood. Today, when we walk these streets, take Calle del León or Calle de Cervantes (back then known as Calle de Francos) for example, or pass by the Convent of Las Trinitarias, we may stop and think, "In times past, Cervantes and Lope also walked on these very roads. They once stopped right here, exactly where I'm standing, and looked up at the same building I'm standing in front of today." It's incredible to think we are gazing upon the same city as they once did.

In 1656, Philip IV of Spain commissioned Pedro Teixeira to design a very precise, reliable map of Madrid that accurately depicted the city's physiognomy. It was this map I used when writing *Captain Alatrisme*. Its large-scale detailed representation in three dimensions is truly impressive. In fact, it's so well done that, if you look closely, you can see every house in the city, its height, whether or not it had a garden and if it did, whether it had a fountain or trees. I pored over Teixeira's map to help me set the scenes. That way, when I was describing an ambush on say Calle Barquillo, by the House of the Seven Chimneys, I could pinpoint the exact corner where it would take place. I knew where the lamppost stood, the spot where one character would wait and from which another would flee.

For me, *Alatrisme* is much more than a book or a novel. It's a window into a world that disappeared long ago, whose streets – thanks to literature – we can now walk again.

Among many other works, **Arturo Pérez-Reverte** (Cartagena, 1951) is the author of the most successful series of novels in contemporary Spanish literature, *The Adventures of Captain Alatrisme*, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2021.

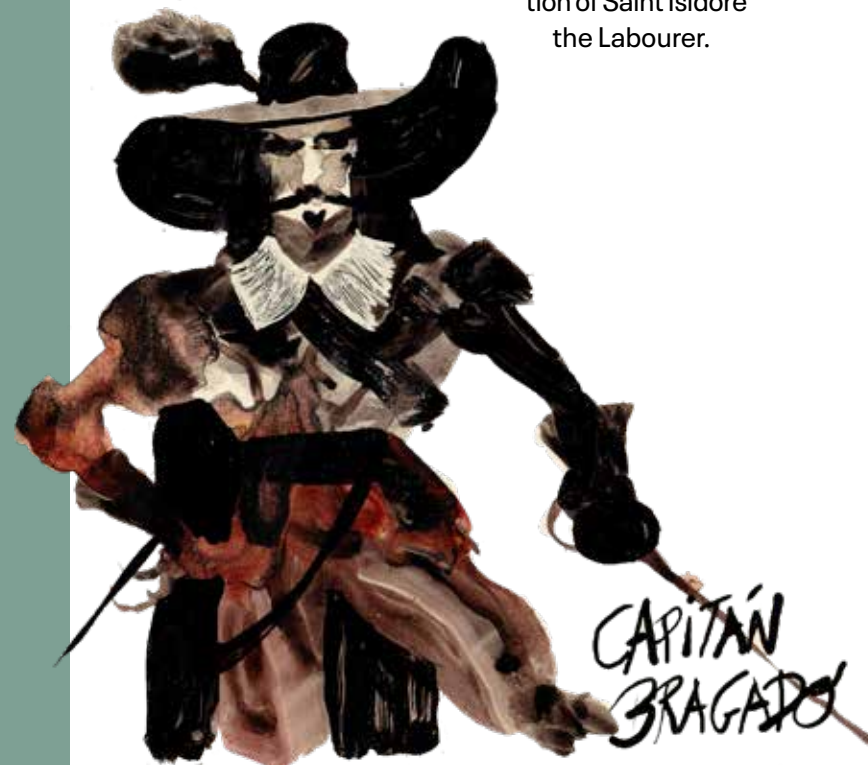


## MADRID IN ALATRISTE'S TIME

### 1 Plaza Mayor

Metro: Sol, Ópera, Tirso de Molina

In Alatrisme's time, this square was the heart of Madrid and the centre of the world. Alongside Sheriff Saldaña, the writer would stroll among stalls selling bread and vegetables set up under the porticoes. It was originally the location of Plaza del Arrabal – where the local farmer's market was held – until Philip III of Spain decided to fulfil the wish of his late father, Philip II, and turn the surrounding wasteland and modest housing into a monument worthy of the monarchy it embodied. The square was officially opened in 1620 with the beatification of Saint Isidore the Labourer.



### 2 Santa Cruz Palace

Plaza de la Provincia, s/n - Metro: Sol, Tirso de Molina

Once the Court's jailhouse and, for some time the prison and courtroom, this well-built, stunning stone-and-brick building was where Alatrisme, much to his dismay, was remanded. In the buildings of this square where the prison was located, the *covachuelas*, or basement offices, were crowded with lawyers, solicitors and pettifoggers who, like ancient almadraba fisherman, strategically chose their place to strike. At that time, as Alatrisme's friend Bartolo Cagafuego reminds us, justice could be bought and bribery was two a penny: "You know, good sir, in Spain justice is worth only as much as one can afford."

### 3 Calle de San Bruno

Metro: La Latina

Calle de San Bruno is more an alley than a street. It is, in fact, Alatrisme's often-frequented Calle del Arcabuz, home to the *Taberna del Turco*, the inn and public house where the captain lived and drank and which was owned by his friend (and more) Caridad la Lebrijana. It would be a sin to pass by the *Taberna del Capitán Alatrisme* without popping in for a nibble and a tiple. It was here, not far from the Puerta de Toledo gate, that the captain famously encountered Lopillo, the son of Lope de Vega, in a duel that resulted in the youth suffering a superficial wound.



### 4 Calle de Toledo

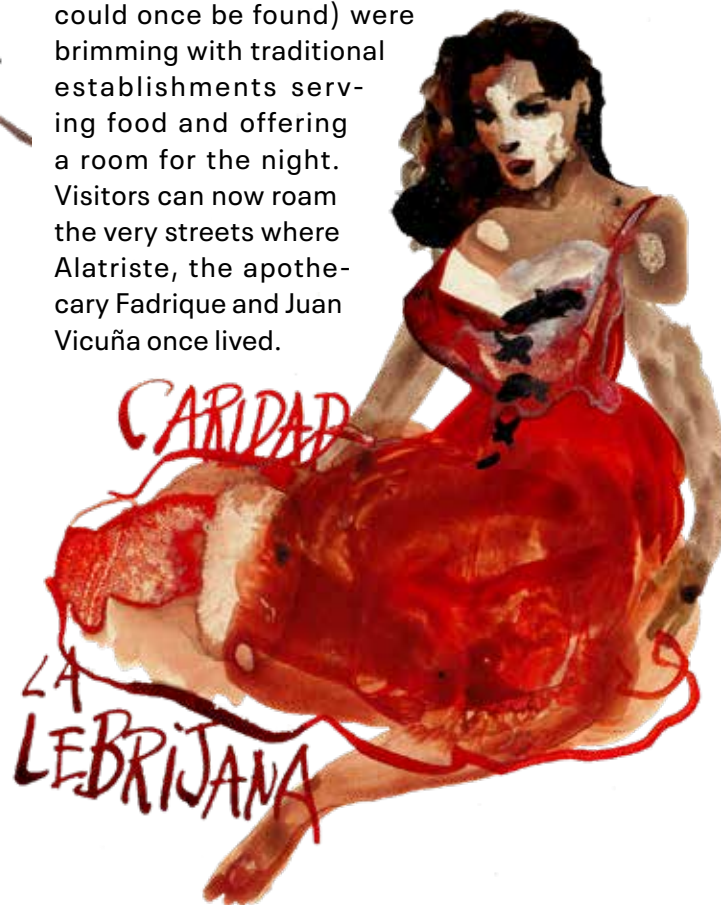
Metro: Puerta de Toledo, La Latina

Calle de Toledo was a bustling, thriving street in Captain Alatrisme's Madrid and was the easiest way to reach the city when arriving from the south. As it led directly to the main market, it was common to see it packed with street sellers and locals out for a stroll. It was home to various well-known inns and traditional eateries and taverns, not forgetting the grand Jesuit church, today the San Isidro Collegiate Church. Neighbouring this splendid Baroque building is the high school of the same name which still preserves the stunning granite courtyard of the former Colegio Imperial, or Imperial College.

### 5 Cava Alta and Cava Baja

Metro: La Latina

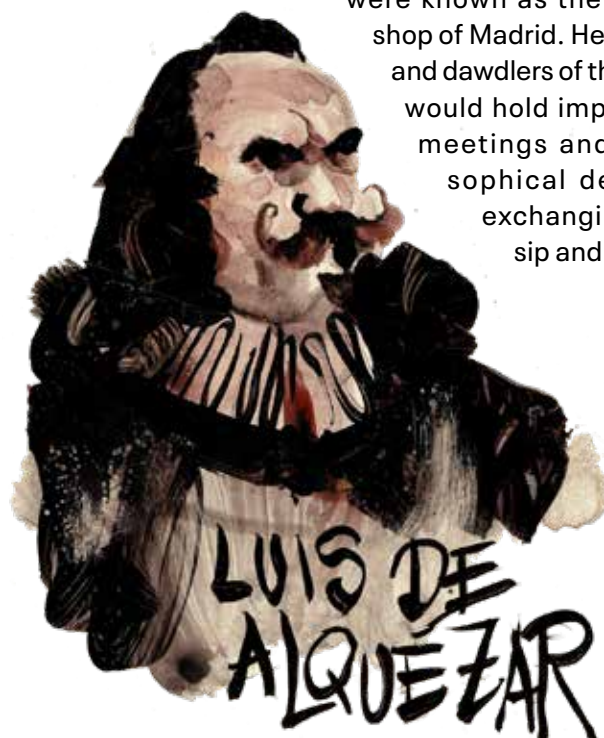
When Alatrisme called this area home, the two streets of Cava Alta and Cava Baja (where the Muslim Wall and its trenches could once be found) were brimming with traditional establishments serving food and offering a room for the night. Visitors can now roam the very streets where Alatrisme, the apothecary Fadrique and Juan Vicuña once lived.



### 6 Plaza de la Villa

Metro: Ópera

This square houses perhaps the most stunning collection of monuments in Hapsburg Madrid. The former city hall, originally known as Casa consistorial, underwent renovation in 1645 on the site of an older building belonging to the president of Castile. Opposite is the Casa y Torre de Lujanes, built by a family of Aragonese knights who took root in Madrid under the service of Henry III of Castile. Their descendants thrived in the Court as royal brokers and waiters, and by Alatrisme's time they had acquired a considerable fortune. The Casa de Cisneros is what remains of the much grander Plateresque-style mansion built in the 16th century by a nephew of the famous Cardinal Cisneros. Its impressive staircase and patio decorated with Talavera tiles are worth seeing. The house overlooks what is today Calle del Cordón. In Alatrisme's day the street was known as Calle de los Azotados, or "the Street of the Whipped", after the punishment suffered here by convicts of the city prison.



### 7 Calle Mayor

Metro: Sol, Ópera

The main street of Alatrisme's Madrid saw many a religious and public procession, including the arrival of illustrious visitors and their entourage to the city, with parades that ran from the palace to the heart of the city – the Puerta del Sol – and back. Calle Mayor was also home to exquisite shops, luxury tailors, silversmiths, embroiderers, silk weavers, and jewellers.



### 8 San Felipe El Real Convent and Church

Calle Mayor - Metro: Sol

These two noble buildings once stood between the Puerta del Sol and the top of Calle Mayor. Construction of their vast courtyard began in 1600 using plans designed by Francisco de Mora. The steps or *lonja* of San Felipe El Real were known as the talking shop of Madrid. Here idlers and dawdlers of the Court would hold impromptu meetings and philosophical debates, exchanging gossip and news.



### 9 San Ginés Church

Arenal, 13 - Metro: Sol, Ópera

Valiants pursued by justice would seek refuge here in Alatrisme's day, as it was unlawful for sheriffs to make arrests in the house of God. The San Ginés Church we know today was designed by the architect Juan Ruiz, around the year 1645. It features three naves, a transept and cupola vault, and among the works of art hanging on its walls is El Greco's oil painting *Christ driving the Traders from the Temple*.

### 10 El Corral del Príncipe (Teatro Español)

Príncipe, 25 - Metro: Sevilla, Sol

This square was home to Madrid's oldest theatre, Corral de la Pacheca (1583), which in Alatrisme's day, when Lope de Vega rose to fame, was known as Corral del Príncipe. Rebuilt after a fire in 1802, it was given its current name Teatro Español. As we contemplate the lines of aficionados at the ticket offices today, we can picture the bustling throngs of rowdy theatre-goers in Alatrisme's time and perhaps even a quarrel with a drawn sword or horn-handled knife: "My God! Does thou know whose toe thou hast trod on?"

### 11 Descalzas Reales Monastery

Plaza de las Descalzas, s/n - Metro: Callao, Sol, Ópera

Noblemen who lived in the Madrid of Captain Alatrisme would send their daughters – armed with a dowry, trousseau and servants – to this high-standing aristocratic convent. Here they would live in accordance with their status and ranking, to be seen and not heard. The monastery was originally the stately home of Alonso Gutiérrez, treasurer to Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, and was where the monarch would reside on his visits to the capital. Given its connection to the Royal Family, the monastery was the subject of great honours and saw musicians, chaplains, sacristans, servants, and slaves pass through its doors.



### 12 The House of the Seven Chimneys

Plaza del Rey, 1 - Metro: Banco de España

This Madrid-style building is a stunning example of 16th-century domestic architecture built in red brick and stone, with seven chimneys and a weathervane on its rooftop. Over the years it has been called home by well-known names such as the Genoese merchant and banker Cattaneo (known as Cataño by those from Madrid) and England's ambassador to Spain, the Earl of Bristol, in 1623. It was here Charles Stuart, Prince of Wales, stayed on an undercover visit to Madrid to meet the King's brother, an event depicted in the first novel of the Captain Alatrisme series.



### 13 Puente de Segovia

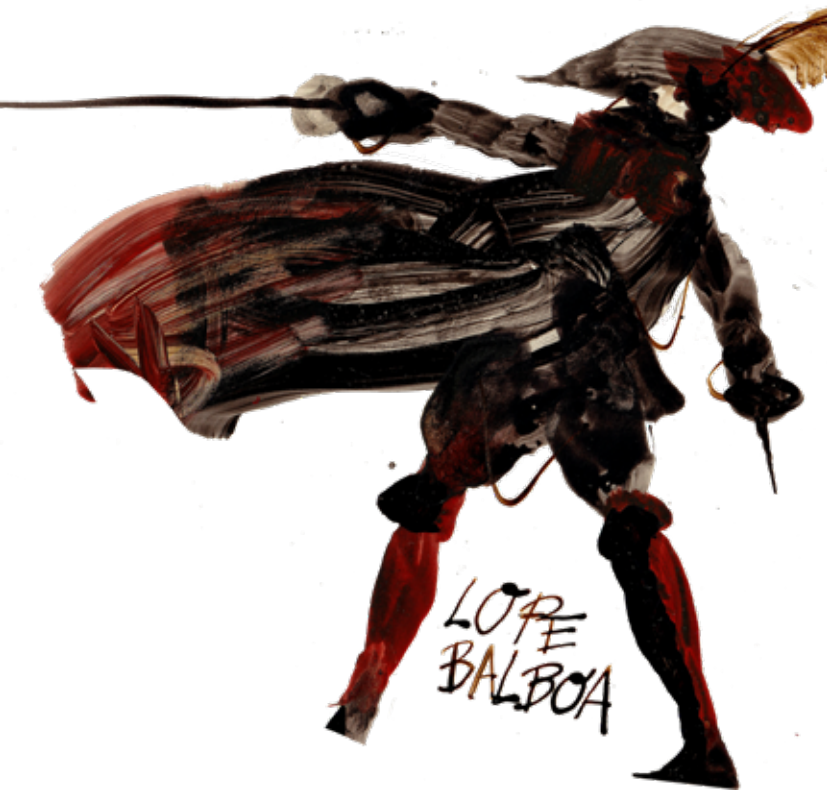
Metro: Puerta del Ángel

When the Hapsburgs would gaze out of the windows of the Royal Alcázar Palace overlooking the River Manzanares, the first thing their eyes would settle on would be the Puente de Segovia bridge. Sixteen years after its construction was first started, this spectacular bridge was finally finished in 1588. Its colossal size was considered rather excessive given the squalid river that ran under its nine semi-circular granite arches, the widest of which lie in the centre of the watercourse.

### 14 Royal Alcázar Palace

Calle de Bailén - Metro: Ópera, Plaza de España

In Alatrisme's day this plot of land where Madrid's Royal Palace presently stands was home to this breath-taking medieval building. It was here the Kings of Castile would reside on occasion, from the 13th century onwards. The Royal Alcázar Palace was a rather unusual building; it was the result of various extensions to the small Castle of Mayrit or Magerit, built by Mohammed I (850–866) on the left banks of the River Manzanares as a defence structure against the Castilians in the periphery of Toledo. In Captain Alatrisme's day, Philip IV of Spain – forced to live in this large abode – hired Luca Giordano and other renowned painters to brighten its dreary rooms with jubilant frescoes, where he also hung paintings by Velázquez, Titian, Rubens, and Murillo.



### 15 Casa de Campo Park

Metro: Lago, Batán, Casa de Campo

On the other side of the River Manzanares lies a sprawling one-thousand-hectare orchard of evergreen oaks and stone pines. In 1559, it was acquired by Philip II and repopulated as the Royal Forest, an excellent hunting ground practically on his doorstep. The Casa de Campo Park forest was home to the famous Steel Fountain of chalybeate waters, which in the times of Alatrisme was frequented by women suffering from chlorosis or "green sickness", today known as iron deficiency.



Text taken from the book *Viaje a los escenarios del capitán Alatrisme*, by Juan Eslava Galán (El País-Aguilar, 2006), except for the description of Calle de Toledo.

