



## Madrid Tales (City Tales)

*Helen Constantine, Margaret Jull Costa*

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The buzzing life of bars, warm evenings by the Manzanares river, the subterranean terrors of the Metro, icy winters and hot, empty summers, student days in the sixties, the ruthless underworld of the city's mafia - this captivating anthology reflects the character of Madrid and the lives of the madrilenos, as its inhabitants are called, in all their splendid variety. Some stories are bizarre, some funny, some serious, and as you read you'll travel through

the city. The famous streets and monuments of Madrid - Cibeles, Calle de Alcalá, Plaza Mayor, and the Royal Palace - as well as the poor, working-class barrios unfrequented by sightseers will pass before your eyes like a moving picture. Some stories, like the Galdós story and Carmen Martín Gaité's 'A clear conscience' depict a journey across Madrid, while in Javier Marías' sinister tale, 'Fallen from fortune', a couple are unaware that their guide to all the usual tourist highlights is leading them to their death. In 'Through the wall' and 'Personality disorders', the characters barely leave their apartments, and the city lurks outside the windows. A rich assortment of characters - adolescent boys obsessed with sex; maids up from the country; provincial girls who slide into prostitution; a small boy excited at the prospect of going downtown with his grandfather; vain, self-absorbed thirty-somethings with too much money; immigrant families far from home; mafia types; diligent office-workers struggling to bring up a family - come alive in the tales.

Few of these stories have previously been translated into English. Some names, such as Benito Pérez Galdós, Javier Marías, Juan José Millás, and Carmen Martín Gaité, will be more familiar than others but all deserve to be better known.

There is a map at the back of the book to indicate the places mentioned in the stories and photographs complement and accompany each story. The reader will also find there biographical notes on the authors and suggestions for further reading.

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