People

The early morning sun gently warms the stones and cobbles of Alqueria, caressing the village into a new day. The divided people of this small pueblo still slept, unconsciously plotting their mayhem for the coming day. If one studies a map of Alqueria, one will see it is heart-shaped with the broadest expanse to the north. Here is where the people play and worship. Walking west along the Calle Generalissimo, we arrive at a confluence of streets. To our left is the *Parroquia de Nuestra Señora de los Remedios,* where the devout of the village attend to their spiritual well-being. To our right is the plaza and the Bar La Casa Devante where the hedonistic attend to their physical well-being. A small fountain in the plaza's centre gurgles with crystal clear water, fresh from the Sierra Alhamilla. The castle of Alqueria is accessed from the plaza by means of six easily scaled steps. It is of Moorish construction with a remarkably well preserved tower.

Leaving the square and heading west once more we pass the small museum which houses the famous *Corsé de Napoleon* and other treasures from the village's past. We now enter the Calle Mirador with the houses of the Hill People to the left. These are ancient dwellings arranged around the cobbled street. There is a small school opposite and then we go on past Poyato's smallholding. This takes us to the southern extremity of Alqueria.

The olive mill, Alqueria's only industry is passed on the right. Opposite it is the bar La Golondrina Verde, playground of Los Recién Llegados, the Newcomers. We now join the Avenida el Raro and pass the fire station on the right. We head east to the abodes of the favoured Newcomers. These are palatial properties, high-walled and swimming-pooled. Walking on we pass the cemetery to the right and then the banks of the Río Verde, reflecting the sun's rays from its calm surface. Joining the Calle el Raro from the right is the Calle Huella Vieja, the northern route out of the village. This completes a circumnavigation of Alqueria and we once again stand bathed in the early morning sun at the village's northern extreme.

The only other street worthy of note is the Calle Horno, the rest being simple thoroughfares. The Calle Horno runs laterally entering the Calle del Siniestro to the west and the Calle Límite to the east. To be in the Calle Horno during the early hours is a sublime experience. The wonderful aroma of freshly baked bread permeates every corner of the street tempting the fasted palate. Also in the Calle is the Ayuntamiento and on the other side of the street the doctor's surgery.

To walk the empty streets of Alqueria during these early hours with the whitewashed houses reflecting the morning sun can lift one's soul. It is only later when the population awake and begin their interminable squabbling that a cloud appears to darken the town.

As Jean-Paul Sartre wrote *'l'enfer, c'est les autres'*.