Alqueria in Song and Dance

Of the three traditional folk cultures of the Iberian continent perhaps Alqueria's is the least known. It could be due to its highbrow content, its sophistication or it could be due to it being ruddy awful. Spain has the Flamenco which has the audience stamping and clapping, Portugal has the Fado in the most melancholy of moods and Alqueria has the 'Ohno' making people wonder why the hell they even bothered. The name Ohno is an abbreviation of the ovation that precedes every performance, which is 'Oh no not that caga again!'

The two most celebrated exponents of song and dance in Alqueria are Pilar del Redondorodillas on vocal and Ernesto Muyinstable on foot. I use the singular as poor Ernesto has only one leg. He is in fact a uniped which may appear at first sight to be somewhat of a drawback for a Flamenco type dancer, in fact it is a great drawback, Señor Muyinstable falls over a lot.

Pilar sings the Ono with gusto which doesn't however distract from the awfulness of the performance. The traditional Ono is a song of varying tempos. It starts with high pitch wailing, followed by a series of low frequency and drawn-out grunts. The grunt is followed by a period of sobbing which is supposed to show emotion, this impression is reinforced by the performer holding the heart. It was during this part of the performance that an itinerant doctor in the audience thought Pilar was having a coronary and advanced intent on mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. When he was close enough to Pilar to see her in all her glory he opted for sending a 'get well soon' card. The much welcomed conclusion is accompanied with the revolving of eyeballs, a remarkable feat of musclier control when performed properly. Unfortunately Pilar has a glass eye which on her last performance shot out like a sabot anti-tank round, pole-axed the cat, ricocheted off the ceiling and landed down the cleavage of Carmen the barmaid where it was retrieved by a grateful and grinning Loco Paco.

Ernesto Muyinstable, on the other hand is always sure of warm applause. Not because of his act, which can only be described as 'sad', this is what one would expect from a performer who is supposed to gyrate and twirl putting any self respecting Dervish to shame, having only one leg. The applause is one of sympathy. Ernesto however, believes it is for his hoofing prowess and is prompted to ever more complicated routines causing him to fall over even more. This attracts more sympathy which leads to ever more complicated routines causing, etc etc. etc.

So why not visit Alqueria and enjoy the song and dance or one could simply paddle in boiling fat, perhaps a more worthwhile alternative.