

The Gods' Land of Asylum Andalusia and its Rituals

Antoinette Molinié

To Tulipanes

The Gods of our Ancient World are migrating toward the South. Pushed back by supermarkets, television shows and the rights of man divorced from himself, they have ended up taking refuge in the last Christian region that faces Islam: in Andalusia that is one of their last lands of asylum. They have left traces of their passage in our museums upon which we construct pyramids in order to feign our veneration for them. Now and then they accompany the silence of a symphony to the rhythm of the high priest's baton. However, in the South they are alive. Accommodating themselves to the din of household appliances and of tourism, they appear sometimes in all the splendor of the Midi during the passage of the virgins of peace and bleeding christs. But most frequently they hide in the midst of the Andalusian festival, under the flanks of the fighting bulls or in taverns that are filled with raucous songs. Be it that they intrude upon a play in order to transform it into a ritual; be it that they honor art and sensuality in their celebrations — they choose for their appearances the blurred boundary between the world of the sacred and of the profane.

The Andalusians venerate them in particular in two rituals that may appear like plays to us, in the flamenco and in the *corrida*.

The Gods in the Dance

The distinction between actors and spectators, that characterizes our theater performances disappears in the flamenco in favor of a common tie between the dancer, the singer, the guitarist, and the

participants. The dancer is the high priest of the cult. She directs the sound of the guitar by changing her movements. By rigidly arresting her body she asks for a *falseta* whose concentration allows her to rush toward the skies with her arms undulating upwards. An accurate appeal of her feet, called *llamada*, indicates that she will fly into a frantic and explicit invocation of the telluric gods. The singer (*cantaor*) is officiating like the guitarist: he specifies what remains unsaid by the guitar through a language that is as stereotyped as a litany. The participants form a Greek-style choir. Through the rhythm of their hands (*palmas*) that distinguish the dull from the clear sounds (*sordas y claras*) and amid shouts of "Olé!" followed by fervent evocations of the dancer's charms (*jaleo*), they give to the performance the cosmic dimension of a shared drama.

The ritual allows man to sign a pact with the world thanks to two essential procedures: by cutting it up into a myriad of units it is endowed with a maniac character; the repetition of the movements has something desperate. Here as elsewhere in other celebrations, the ritual is "endlessly differentiated and accords different values to the minor nuances. It is not at all interested in the general, but on the contrary cultivates the varieties and sub-varieties of the full range of taxonomies. ... " (Lévi-Strauss, 1971, p.601). The overall musical and choreographic corpus of the flamenco is composed of distinctive rhythms whose subtle differences define the genre: *canto jondo* (the profound song) of the *soleares* or *seguidillas*; *canto chico* (little song) of the *bulerías* or *fandangos*. The measure is punctuated by a scheme of four positions adopted by the dancer's feet: *punta*, *tacón*, *planta*, and *golpe* come together to articulate the link between man and earth that is expressed in this genre. The language dramatizes the chant: the feet of Carmen Amaya simultaneously summon the modulations of the guitar and the couplets of the *cantaor*. They suggest the pain and the joy of being there, then moved up elsewhere, losing us in the initiatory labyrinth with the rigor of a metronome, to the desperate appeals to the communion of the congregation. And when listening to it, one can only meditate or cry.

The Gods' Land of Asylum

This breaking-up of the sequence is exalted by its repetition. The same rhythms reappear in one festival after the other and their interpretation, though changing in accordance with the inspiration of the dancer and the guitarist, will retain its stereotypical character that fascinates the actors of a ritual to the point of ecstasy. Neither the recent adaptations to new harmonies nor the horror of "*déjà vu*" that is typical of the blasé attitudes of "modern" Andalusians were able to disconnect the flamenco from those two characteristics -compartmentalization and its repetitiveness — that move it close to the ritual. Like the latter, it thus produces continuity from discontinuity by stringing the pearls of the rhythms onto the unbroken thread of life. It is moreover very clearly expressed in the song's words that account for its disconcerting mockery. The tone and the rhythm are out of proportion with the tension of the story that is being told. They are also dramatic in a *fandango* that tells the story of an unhappy hunt:

<i>Ayer tarde fui a cazar</i>	Yesterday afternoon I went hunting
<i>Ocho pajaros maté</i>	I shot eight birds
<i>Y no llegué a la docena</i>	Instead of a dozen
<i>Porque me empezó a llover</i>	For it began to rain
<i>Ay! si la tarde está buena!</i>	Ah! If it were fine weather tonight!

And so they are in a *petenera* in order to evoke a drama:

<i>Si me llegara la muerte</i>	If death approaches me
<i>Dile, por Dios compañera</i>	With God as my companion
<i>Al hijo que está en tu</i>	Tell the son who is inside
<i>Ventre</i>	You
<i>Que la mentira condena</i>	That the lie condemns
<i>A quien la verdad defiende</i>	The one who defends truth.

The flamenco always expresses a tension; it fills the heart and the body with an indescribable anxiety, whatever the story may be which is being told. This unease accompanies, in varying degrees, but invariably so, all rituals and their whimsical pursuit with the connecting of myth and life. Here the tension is expressed in the movements of the singer's arms stretched out desperately toward the dancer whom he follows in her wild course with the rhythms

and reveals itself in the dancer's face in a most extraordinary expressiveness. She wrinkles the top of her nose and purses her lips; she fixes her gaze onto that otherness with which she tries to achieve physical union: "*ponte fea!*" "Make yourself ugly!" the congregation fervently implores her. The chorus thus demands from the officiant to open up in her beauty that paroxysmic breach by which the quest for a union between life and death is engulfed and without which the sacred cannot exist. The chorus howls in joy and terror.

These ritual aspects of the flamenco become obvious during the Holy Week when the flamenco integrates itself into the celebration of Christ's Passion in form of the *saeta*. As a haunting lament over the wounds of Jesus Christ or the Virgin as she sees the martyred body of her son, the *saeta* here becomes a ritual chant not only in itself but moreover through its explicit function. *Saeta* means "arrow," and it is virtually a hyphen, a dash connecting with the divine that the faithful draw from the aristocratic balconies or anonymous streets in the Sevillean night embalmed by orange flowers.

The Gods in Combat

That the *corrida* is a ritual comes as still more of a surprise. How can a society which is founded upon Christian charity and equality of opportunity organize a sacred encounter in blood — the massacre of a living being and the chance that a man may be killed?

This is because the *corrida* is more than a sport and more than an art; it is the ritual of a fusion and the subsequent separation of two beings. The poet knows that it is similar to love. In all its details the *corrida* is permeated by an erotic atmosphere: the phallic power of the bull whose genitals will be consumed in a pub after the festival; the dance and the passing caresses of the first *tercio* when the bull gets entangled in the cape held out to him alluringly; their repetition that reduces the pleasure and the progressive move toward the paroxysm of the final *tercio* when the torero delivers the fatal thrust with a more than symbolic gesture, carrying the inflamed spectators into a howling ecstasy. Michel Leiris (1964, p. 44) has seen in this an amorous embrace that "paradoxically gains its value from the fact that it is the means by which a thinking person can believe

that he is being materially united, if only during a brief moment, with the world, encapsulated in a single living being."

The corrida, like love, in fact defines the identity of each of the partners by passing through their preliminary mortal union. It operates through a mechanism of inversion that is common to many rituals (Pitt-Rivers, 1983). At the beginning the torero assumes feminine characteristics that are being expressed in the way in which he seduces the bull with the swirling of his rag held like a flounced skirt. His passes have in their majority feminine names (*verónica, chicuelina*), and his shining dress has effeminate aspects.

Como el toro te sigo y te persigo

Y dejas mi deseo en una espada

Como el toro burlado, como el toro.

Like the bull I follow you and pursue you.

And you leave my desire in a sword

Like the duped bull, like the bull.

Miquel Hernandez

During the entire ritual the bull is going to lose his phallic character. The *picador* opens a bleeding wound in the middle of its body. The *banderilleros* decorate this opening with multi-colored frisettes to enhance it. The ritual of seduction with the thrusts of the cape during the first *tercio* stands in marked contrast with the provocative and somewhat exhibitionist thrusts of the *muleta* which precedes the death blow. After having cast off, throughout the fight (*lidia*), his feminine symbols, the *tercio de muerte*, places the torero, who inserts the sword up to the handle in the bull's fatal wound, in a clearly virile position. George Bataille felt no hesitation to celebrate "the bull's orgasm." After the confusion over categories that dangerously pervades the entire length of the ritual, just as it also threatens passionate love, all returns to order. The ovation by the public releases the tension of the act of love as it celebrates the return of clearly distinguishable limits between the sexes. The ritual is impeccably ordered: disorder is treated wisely by the progressive appropriation of the virile qualities of the bull by the officiant who is more and more expressly situated. The momentary fault in the order of the sexes expresses the unfin-

ished state of our human condition, with the sacred emerging in that flash-like encounter between the two sexes. The bleeding and feminine would of the bull — “that crevice from which rise the fluids of a panicky delirium” (Leiris, *op.cit.*, p. 40).

The corrida is all the more so a ritual that indisputably has a sacrificial dimension. All the actors are present. The torero is the sacrificer who is mandated by the crowd with which he remains in close contact through the shouts, the ovations, the consecration of the bull through a gesture of his *montera*, and the requests which the crowd makes to the presidency on his behalf. But to whom does the torero sacrifice the bull? With what divinity have the torero and his victim been charged to put the crowd into contact?

The order of the sexes after their fusion that establishes the corrida suggests that it is the power of fecundity that one expects of the bull. For the public it takes on feminine qualities that he has taken away from the torero. The bull dies so that men can regain their natural forces from which culture has separated them. Other rituals from other contexts clarify this (Pitt-Rivers, *op.cit.*). A bridal bull is taken to the residence of the future spouse. The fiancé kills it after he has put *banderillas* on it made by his future wife. During corridas in Provence the young men tear off the hair from the bull's tail and offer it as a bouquet to the young women who ostentatiously place it in their bosoms.

Thus the bull assumes the role of virility, whereas the bull as victim takes upon itself, like Christ did with the sins of the world, the menacing feminine aspects that all men carry inside themselves. The corrida establishes a separation of the sexes after their fusion in the course of the fight. Its sacrificial dimension reunites the victimized bull with the torero as the sacrificer in the face of a deified fecundity. Thus following the classic model of sacrifice (Hubert and Mauss, 1968), the gathering establishes a continuity between itself and the sacred through the two intermediaries who are the victim and the sacrificer.

As with many other sacrifices, there exists in this one a clear affinity between the victim and the sacrificer. The bull is more

than a representation of the male sex. It is a wild animal and even one that has been "made wild" for the purpose of the ritual. Beyond the representation of virility that it assumes, the bull is the symbol of the regenerative power. Victim and sacrificer have more than common characteristics; they have one and the same identity. This is a point that the sacrifice of the bull shares with another sacrifice with which it maintains a complicitous relationship: that of the mystical Lamb that is both victim and implementor of a renewed holocaust during mass. Does the corrida, like the mass, consecrate the sacrifice of a god? And does this offering not periodically create that divinity itself for which it is destined? The connections between the sacrifice of the bull and that of the Lamb are far from being imaginary (Pitt-Rivers, *op.cit.*). The corrida season opens on Easter Sunday, just after the celebration of the sacrifice of the Lamb, following the majestic Good Friday processions. The juxtaposition of the two symbols that express the two victims is significant. On Friday the women wear a black mantilla, the color of mourning and of the waiting bull; on Sunday they put on the white mantilla, the color of the immolated Lamb, while the men display an imposing cigar in their pocket or their mouth.

In Andalusia where the time keeping is upset by an obligatory imagination, two apparitions have been recorded: that of the bull bursting into the *toril* ("*a cinco de la tarde*") and that of each of the Christ figures crucified by each of the guilds who depart from their respective church, amidst the chaos created by the bearers, penitents, musicians, and faithfuls, with bewildering precision. Two rituals of Andalusian Christianity thus celebrate two divinities that probably represent two moments in the history of this people: one in which the divine disguises itself in what appears as a game; and the other in which it can blossom with impunity thanks to the magical spectacle of representation. For these two encounters the Andalusians will be on time.

Passions

In Andalusia, like elsewhere, the play since time immemorial offers the gods their tribute. In democratic Greece, the tragedy

integrated them, be it in order to represent a ritual that at the same time celebrated them, be it in order to establish the same as a ritual. Certain genres of theater probably originated in a cult. Thus the dithyramb and the satirical drama are linked to the cult of Dionysus. In the rites of possession the trance imperceptibly transformed theater as play into theater as life. In Ethiopia, for example, the possessing spirits have a character that is recognizable by everybody, and the crises are stereotyped since they are taught. Conversely, the characters that are shaped by tradition, such as, for example, those that are embodied by the actors of the *Commedia dell'arte*, evoke ritual actors through the rigidity of their comportment in the various intrigues. In South India the spectacular aspects of a cult are an integral part of the ritual. The votive mortification is theatrical by nature. The march on fire celebrated during the night of the fourth day of Pana is a kind of ceremonialist miracle. A specific dance is associated with every mortification. Other cultures literally put their cosmogony on stage. Thus the Aztecs regularly and with deafening noise sacrificed thousands of human victims in order to regenerate the cosmic forces that were constantly wasting away. These sacred massacres that were indispensable for the survival of the world assumed the dimensions of a hallucinatory spectacle: that one thought exclusively of those priests clothed entirely in the skins of people skinned alive, whom the Spanish conquistadors encountered at a street-corner in Tenochtitlan.

The sacramental vehicles that were offered in Andalusia to the "infidels" to be won back enacted an episode from the Bible or from the life of a saint with the aim of edification. The plot was more or less well-known. It was the delayed enactment of the dénouement that provided the dramatic twist. Mary Magdalene vacillated at each stage between her carnal nature and receiving the grace of God. The result was clearly determined; but her spells of doubt facilitated a play that created drama. The Festival of God in Seville annually enacted episodes from the Old Testament with superb stage-sets produced by the Sevilleans, with choreographies and genuine theatrical effects.

With luck this dramaturgy should adapt to the culture of television democracy that today imposes upon the gods, introduced by the sacramental vehicles, a spectacular dimension to which they better adapt themselves. If the gods disguise themselves in the dance of the flamencos and in the bull fights, they insolently expose themselves in the processions of the Holy Week. They equally lend themselves without shame to tourist agencies, although keeping themselves out of reach to some extent, by the elliptical shine of the candle-light and by popular devotion.

The actors in the Passion drama are placed on gigantic thrones (*pasos*) surrounded by candles and flowers. Lasting for four days and four nights, they are being carried above the hoods of the penitents (*nazarenos*) and banners to funeral music and murmured prayers. Their bearers, crushed by massive silver and the tears of crucifixion have been waiting for this privilege for many years. These images, each represented by a guild that corresponds to a profession, to a section of town or to an ethnic group like the Gypsies, allows each category of Sevilleans to give themselves a specific identity while everyone unites through the same ritual.

The different stages of the Passion are thus interpreted in the most baroque of realisms. On one such throne Jesus Despojado is stripped of his tunic. In another scene Christ institutes the sacrament of the Eucharist, sitting at a table with his twelve apostles. The Beso de Judas represents the kiss of the traitor. Jesus de las Penas falls down crushed by a seventh-century cross made of silver and scale, while an angel catches the water that drips from the side of the crucified onto the *paso* de Las Aguas. The group of blood donors follows a sixteenth-century Christ who receives a crown of thorns. The group of Estudiantes, divided into sections that correspond to the academic disciplines, silently adore the Cristo de la Buena Muerte. The Bofetá enacts the slap in the face of the tortured. On Good Friday, the Cachorro passes away under the strokes of a gypsy, as the artist captured it in 1682 at the moment of death in a tavern at Triana, with a knife in the chest. His half-open mouth appears to murmur the most disturbing words of the Testament: "My God, my God, why hast Thou for-

saken me?" As Christ passes by carrying the cross of coral and silver and surrounded by 600 *nazarenos* who mimic him, the trumpets remain mute and the crowd lapses into a telluric silence to celebrate the god whom they call El Silencio. El Gran Poder, the aristocratic "Lord of Seville" who performs miracles throughout the year, attracts particular devotion. Otherwise some 48 *costaleros* of the Santa Marta guild (of hoteliers) carry the heavy load of the nine people present at the burial: the deceased Christ is carried by Joseph of Arimathia and Nicomedes, surrounded by the Virgin, Saint John, Martha and the three Maries. On Easter Sunday at five in the afternoon, the Corrida of the Resurrection celebrates the metamorphosis of the sacrificial Lamb into a virile bull.

Meanwhile the figure of Christ, who in principle should have been the main actor in the processions of Holy Week, played no more than a secondary role. It was the mother of God and all the other people who dominated the scene. The *pasos* of the Virgin Mary of each guild, too numerous and too beautiful to describe them all here, followed those of the individual "mysteries" that represented the stages of the Passion. The Sevillians who worshipped the Virgin Mary had venerated the mystery of the Immaculate Conception for several centuries before the Catholic Church proclaimed it as a dogma in 1854. Of the 113 *pasos* that participated in 1989, some 52 represented the Virgin and 23 Christ, with the rest interpreting the "mysteries."

La Maracena is invested with a ceremony that is comparable to that of the torero when appearing in a bright dress. In order to see her leave the church on Good Friday, we must take up a position around the portal several hours in advance. When she appears in tears, carried by the sturdy fellows of her guild, the shouts remind one of those of the enthusiasts when the bull appears from the *toril* in the arena or of those of the flamenco chorus when they address the dancer: "Slut, how beautiful you are!" Or: "Look, she is still more beautiful this year!" In the midst of the drama of the procession, surrounded by a cortège of 2,000 *nazarenos* and escorted by her centurions, she stops suddenly, directed by an anonymous *saeta*. A bit further on the crowd begs her to dance.

The musicians play a *paso doble* and the bearers provide her with the rhythm. The tons of massive silver begin to sway, her handkerchief wet with tears is blown away and she moves about rhythmically on the virile shoulders of the guild-members: "Olé, the most beautiful!"

Her rival crosses the river to reach the gypsy quarter of Triana. La Esperanza moves across Isabel II Bridge toward the two Arab towers, one of gold, and the other of Giralda. The question is who of the two will be the most sumptuous and offer the most poignant rendering of the son's death while making her way through the aisle of the cathedral, just like through each of the *pasos*. Each assumes alternatively the role of the mother and of the prostitute, those two figures between whom the metronome of Andalusian virility moves back and forth.

"*Aquí no hay más Dios que la Virgen*" ("Here there is no God but the Virgin.") declares a pilgrim to the Virgin of Rocio that attracts thousands of Andalusians every year at Whitsun. They assemble here each year in a "non-place" of pines and sand which they take over to pray but also to drink *manzanilla* that tastes of seawater, and to dance vibrant *sevillanas* to the sound of pipes and tambourines. They arrive on foot, dressed in flamencos and decorated with scented plants, with their guild, with their ox-drawn carts, their horses, and an indescribable love of life that is marked by both mysticism and ecstasy. During the night from Whitsunday to Whitmonday, after three days and above all three nights of gaiety, a shrill shout interrupts the prayers and dances: "*Almonteños a por ella!*" The young folks of Almonte, whose land is also that of the Virgin, suddenly jump over the railing and abduct their Blanca Paloma (White Dove). There is an indescribable scuffle as to who can carry the divinity: "*Meterse debajo de Ella.*" ("Placing oneself under Her.") Everyone tries to protect her from the hands of the stranger with the violence of true "machos." As one of them collapses, other shoulders come forward and the Virgin passes bumpily over the bent and dripping bodies like a ship that is driven by pleasure. Those who struggle hard to touch the tip of her embroidered cape shout flatteries in quarter time comparable to

that of the fandango of Huelva, the nearby town: "*Guapa, guapa, guapa y guapa y guapa!*" When the long way back has to be taken across the *marisma*, one sings of the pain of abandoning her, as if in a love poem, in the rhythm of a *sevillana rocería*:

<i>Volver la cara</i>	To turn one's back
<i>Que trabajito cuesta</i>	It is hard
<i>Volver la cara</i>	To turn one's back on her
<i>Sabiendo que se queda</i>	Knowing that she
<i>Solita ella.</i>	Remains alone.

The Virgin then returns to the "mother guild" of Almonte until next year. A female servant is the only one to see her naked to dress her with her night gown, her bustier, her six white petticoats, her three golden gala robes, and her five current dresses. "Does she wear shoes?" "That's a secret."

To preserve the secret is what appears to tempt the wild admirers of the Virgin when they beat the "strangers" who would like to touch their goddess. The ritual has been appropriated step by step by the Andalusians from the "sub-guilds" of Triana, Huelva, or Jerez, later by those of Barcelona, Toledo and elsewhere. Until today the "closed" ritual of the guilds of Almonte and Villamanrique has had those additions without change to the overall structure. The exact distances that take each guild from its village to the sanctuary form a veritable ritual web, while the aggressiveness of the Almontenos, that is accepted by all, guarantees the effectiveness of the rites. Today the pilgrimage of Rocio has become the symbol of an Andalusian "identity," which has been given a statute, a *Junta* and a green and white flag that can always be seen flying over the sanctuary. The entire course of local politics goes through an apparition at Rocio which the press disseminates with much ado. Here as in the processions of Holy Week the notables go about their business in the sacred shadow of the altars.

The Images of the Sevillians have often been usurped by politicians. The guild of Santo Entierro was founded in 1248 by king San Fernando to indoctrinate the Muslim inhabitants of the city. Today

its *pasos* are being headed by a representative of the king of Spain, by the archbishop and the mayor of Seville as well as by a delegation of the Civil Guard and the Court House. The Spanish kings have always been members of religious guilds and have come to Seville during Holy Week. Moreover, since Charles II all heads of state have been members of Santo Entierro. Each king joined the guild of his choice, with the record being held by Ferdinand VII who became a member of a good dozen of them.

Francoism mercilessly instrumentalized the divinities by militarizing the procession and by putting them into the service of the "Crusade." Queipo de Llano proclaimed to have conquered Seville "thanks to his faith in the Virgin of La Esperanza," near whom he was buried. La Macarena delivered her crown to the army in 1936. In 1939 Gran Poder walked in a procession of thanks "for the war of liberation" and for Franco, while Carrero Blanco, who would have succeeded Franco had he not been killed in his car by liberationist Basque bombs, wore a *nazareno* hood to follow the *Pasión*. This appropriation assumed dramatic forms on the Thursday of Holy Week 1932 when the leaders of the right-wing parties manipulated the guilds into preventing the *pasos* from walking in the procession in order to be able to declare that they had been banned by the "Red hordes" of the Republic. Despite this maneuver, the Virgin of La Estrella went ahead. Holding in her hand the golden star with inlays of precious stone, she crossed the river; on the bridge the sea breeze ruffled her lacy dress. When she entered the cathedral she was shot at. But only her canopy was hit, and she returned triumphantly to her Triana quarter. Today she bears the title La Valiente in memory of the courage with which she faced the barbarians.

Today the divine Images form a grand unity with those of Spanish democracy. Members of the parties of the right as well as the Left make their "entrism" into the powerful guilds, without anybody being worried whether their beliefs are compatible. Democracy disarms the processions: no more uniforms behind the penitents. However, in 1980 the Right relaunched its offensive against Seville's first elected town council since the Civil War. The

guilds refused to stop, as had been the tradition, their Images before the official platform in the Plaza San Francisco, causing passionate debate and in particular a campaign unleashed by the traditionalist press. At the time of Holy Week, there was a political explosion. The president had the poor taste of competing against the Virgin of Baratillo (named after the quarter of Arenal located next to the area where Cervantes had been carousing) by appearing on the balcony of a street, delirious. It was the moment of the *saeta*. A supreme offense had been committed! The singer thought it right to mention the president:

*Escucha bien, Madre mía
La plegaria de mi cante.
Te pido ton toa mi alma
Que bendigas y protejas
Al presidente de España.*

Listen closely, oh Mother
To the request of my song.
I implore you with all my soul
To bless and to protect
The president of Spain.

The crowd booted His Excellency who had dared to compete with the goddess. The propaganda maneuver had failed lamentably and for a long time the Sevillians spoke mockingly about his cheek.

The Andalusian gods have defended themselves well. They have been more seriously undermined by another enemy. Paradoxically because they are so theatrical — an aspect that had been introduced with the Reconquista — it threatens to expel them today. It is above all the tour operators who sell them to tourists. In 1990 an equine disease prohibited pilgrims from coming on horse-back. Some have made the journey in the sands of the *marisma* on motorcycles or in four-wheelers, giving the festival an air of the Paris-Dakar race that does not augur well for the future of Blanca Paloma. However, the main enemy is even more pernicious. Television has shamelessly transformed the filmed ritual into a spectacle. If it could usefully show us the subtleties of a ritual and contribute to explaining it; but it does nothing of the kind since it addresses those who celebrate their own gods. Television turns them into puppets, and the spectacle invades the sphere of symbols. Today it is the halogen lamps and the television cameras that pretend to give the signal for the rape of the Virgin of Rocio by the inhabitants of Almonte who are prancing behind the rail-

ing. Drained step by step of its meaning, Blanca Paloma risks becoming a simple label for the "Andalusian identity" or at worst a kind of cover. Is this an alarmist reaction by those who have lost their gods long ago? That is what the pilgrims of Rocio seem to think who have recovered television with their own genius. They say that the light of the projectors paints onto the face of the divinity an infinite desire that gives the signal for the abduction. One day when Mary has had enough of smiling at the merchants of the temple, the Andalusians will perhaps take her away forever.

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