

Why bullfighting is valuable

Business



Bullfighting is the most tragic, beautiful, and quintessentially Spanish of traditions. The Iberian tradition recounts a history of conquest and liberation, of authoritative rule and subsequent liberation, and of the push and pull of the tides in the Alboran sea. Perhaps most important of these histories is that of life and death, of agile man and noble beast.

The burden of a history as rich as that of Spain, as is the case in many cultures around the world, is stereotyping and misunderstanding. The story of Spain is one of tradition, and of these traditions none is more important, yet misunderstood and criminalized than the bullfight. The Spanish bullfight is not only a somewhat alienating tradition, but more importantly, and ancient one. Without a knowledge of the history of the tradition, or the reasons that it continues it may seem like nothing more than a senseless slaughter. Depending on the source, the origins of the bullfight date from as far back as biblical times, up to the seventh century. However, despite the uncertainty around its origins, it is clear that the art of the bullfight has been deeply ingrained in the Spanish culture for a very long time.

The bullfight is an event that many people are deeply sentimental about and feel a certain nostalgia for. Despite opposition, numerous people ranging from the King of Spain to people of Spanish descent living in North and South America all clamor for and wholly love the noble battle of man and bull. Furthermore, although the bullfight has had an important cultural impact as a longstanding tradition, it has also had a deep impact on the art world. Picasso created many paintings inspired by the bullfight, as did Goya. However, this inspiration is not only limited to Spanish artists.

Ernest Hemingway was a supporter of the bullfight as well, praising the tradition in books such as *Death in the Afternoon* (Hemingway, 1932). It is not difficult to see why artists and writers would be pulled towards such a tradition. The event is deeply emotional and can be used as a metaphor for any number of things. The bullfight is also both visually and emotionally brilliant, vibrant with color and motion, as well as confusion. Based on the sheer number of artistic creations centered around the bullfight, as well as the famous names associated with it, it is clear that the tradition has found an important place in the world of art. As with any old tradition, the bullfight is often misunderstood and its events sensationalized.

One aspect of the fight that is often sensationalized is the treatment of the bulls. In some cases yes, they may have been treated very poorly, but for the most part the bulls are prized animals and are treated well. Not only do the fighting bulls outlive many of their kin, but also get a chance to fight for themselves, something that most animals today do not have. Additionally, fighting bulls are allowed to be more like wild bulls than their counterparts and are allowed to live in large natural spaces with minimal contact from humans. When compared to what one usually hears about the treatment of the bulls this is a very good existence, more wild, more free, and with the ever important opportunity to defend oneself.

In addition to the treatment of the bull, the death of the bull is another aspect that is often sensationalized (Telegraph, 2011). Is it better to die in a meat factory, defenseless, along with thousands of others, or by the point of the sword after a difficult struggle? For what purpose does a bull have to live if it is only considered a food animal? To turn the bull into just another farm
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animal is to dishonor and devalue a beautiful animal. Furthermore, the bulls are not the only ones that are injured. Opponents of bullfighting often choose to ignore the danger that the matadors face. A bullfighting event held in Spain during May of 2014 was canceled due to too many of the matadors being injured by the bulls and not being able to continue. The bullfight is a two sided struggle, both man and bull can receive injuries that are just as fatal.

To conclude, the bullfight is a tradition that is as ancient as it is loved and misunderstood. While opponents argue that the bullfight is a brutal and vile tradition, the effect that the tradition has had on the arts and in the hearts of many is unquestionable. The era of today is one where society is almost entirely disconnected from its food sources, one where we ignore tragedy, even if it is all around us, and one in which animals have become nothing more than industrial commodities. The bullfight serves to not only wake us up to the harsh realities of life that we must learn to accept, but also to give purpose to an animal that would otherwise be extinct if it were not used for food. Perhaps the bullfight, that beautiful and tragic reminder of the way in which the world works and has always worked, is more important today than it has ever been before. I do not expect everyone to go out and support the bullfight, but I think it is important for people to learn about the tradition before crusading against it. If those against the art of the bullfight were to look further into the tradition I feel that they would find it to be more noble, or at the very least less repulsive than they might have previously thought.