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SOCIAL THOUGHT & COMMENTARY

**Torphies and Torphobes:  
The Politics of Bulls and Bullfights  
in Contemporary Spain**

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**Abstract**

*Although the bullfight as a public spectacle extends throughout southwestern Europe and much of Latin America, it attains greatest political, cultural, and symbolic salience in Spain. Yet within Spain today, the bullfight has come under serious attack, from at least three sources: (1) Catalan nationalists, (2) Spaniards who identify with the new Europe, and (3) increasingly vocal animal rights advocates. This article explores the current debate—cultural, political, and ethical—on bulls and bullfighting within the Spanish state, and explores the sources of recent controversy on this issue. [Keywords: Spain, bullfighting, Catalonia, animal rights, public spectacle, nationalism, European Union]*

As is well known, the bullfight as a public spectacle extends throughout southwestern Europe (e.g., Campbell 1932, Colomb and Thorel 2005, Saumade 1994), particularly southern France, Portugal, and Spain. It is in Spain alone, however, that this custom has attained notable political, cultural, and symbolic salience. For many Spaniards, the bull is a quasi-sacred creature (Pérez Álvarez 2004), the bullfight a display of exceptional artistry. Tourists consider bullfights virtually synonymous with Spain and flock to these events as a source of exotic entertainment. My impression, in fact, is that bullfighting is even more closely associated with Spanish national identity than baseball is to that of the United States. Garry Marvin puts the matter well when he writes that the cultural significance of the bullfight is “suggested by its general popular image as something quintessentially Spanish, by the considerable attention paid to it within Spain, and because of its status as an elaborate and spectacular ritual drama which is staged as an essential part of many important celebrations” (Marvin 1988:xv). Marvin observes, moreover, that the *torero*, or bullfighter, has “long been a heroic figure who occupied a special place in Spanish popular culture” (Ibid.). Marvin’s observations concerning the centrality of bulls and bullfighting to Spaniards, both historically and contemporaneously, are more than confirmed by the enormous number and variety of proverbs that focus on bulls and the bullfight in general (see e.g., Correas 1924; Rodríguez Marín 1924, 1930, 1934, 1941; Ugarte 2003-2005). Timothy Mitchell, along with numerous Spanish commentators, terms the bullfight “The Fiesta Nacional” (Mitchell 1991:120-153) and the “prime example” of a sign representing Spanish national identity (Ibid.:120).

We must also consider the bullfight as commercial enterprise. As Sarah Pink states, “The bullfight is not simply an annual event that the local council promotes as ‘our tradition’; it is not an attraction funded by local government and promoted to draw in tourists and enliven the local economy. Rather it is ‘big business’ and participates as such in a market economy” (Pink 1997:198). At Café Press (2009 [www.cafepress.com/theblackbull](http://www.cafepress.com/theblackbull)), a commercial web site accessible in multiple languages, customers can order a host of articles adorned with the famous Osborne bull. These include mugs, thongs, coasters, wall clocks, tote bags, boxer shorts, baseball caps, and mouse pads, among others. This site is only one of scores of internet sources advertising Osborne bull products, including a number that offer framed or unframed fine art photos of this popular national symbol.

Please e-mail the Osborne bull photo as a JPG, EPS, TIF or GIF file. No MSWord files please. In the highest resolution (largest file) available .

To: kathleencole@mac.com

Thank you!

**Photo caption to come.**

To appreciate the deep significance of bulls and bullfighting to the Spanish self-image, let us simply consider the recent history of the starkly black Osborne bull. Inaugurated in 1957, billboards—which at least one writer refers to aptly as bullboards (Block 2007)—were originally only 13 feet high and cut from a single piece of wood. Largely because of deterioration from weather exposure, Osborne commissioned artisans to design and construct a substantially more durable heavy metal structure. The result was an oversized bull, assembled in the manner of a jigsaw puzzle and held erect by an elaborate scaffolding network. Initially, the bull-shaped advertisements were increased to 23 feet in height. However, when a law was passed in the early 1960s requiring that all billboards be erected at least 400 feet from the side of the road, Osborne recognized that the size of the bullboard would have to be increased. The result is an engineering marvel, an immense structure standing forty-five feet high and weighing 9000 pounds. (Ibid:54-58). This popular landmark is, in effect, an advertisement for a well-known Osborne corporation product, Veterano Brandy. Over the past generation, it has become one of the most recognizable and unique icons of the Spanish countryside. Today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, ninety Osborne bulls, each supported by fifty-five tons of scaffolding, function as prominent landmarks along highways throughout the country.

The Osborne bulls were threatened with extinction when, in July 1988, the Spanish government passed a law [known as Article 24.1 of Law 25] totally banning commercial advertising on national roads. The law was sanctioned by an imposition of heavy fines, which could go as high as

twenty-five million pesetas (Tribunal Supremo 1997). In fact, it was not until six years later, in 1994, that Spain's Council of Ministers imposed on Osborne y Cia., S.A.—the official company name—the lightest fine permitted by the law—that is, 1,000,001 pesetas (about US\$7,800 at the time)—specifically for mounting the billboard in a particular locale along the Gigón-Avilés highway. Osborne's initial reaction to Law 25 of the 1988 highway code was to completely obliterate with black paint the billboard's text, which had read "Osborne—Sherry & Brandy." This modification left a solid black bull. The Spanish government still deemed this gesture insufficient for compliance with the law. The bull had become such a widely known and powerful symbol that, even without writing on the billboard, Spaniards interpreted the silhouette as a commercial poster promoting the interests of Osborne liquor. In legal terms, the structure was declared to constitute an advertisement. The government issued the designated fines and instructed Osborne to tear down the bulls.

This step was met by an immediate outcry throughout Spain, particularly from the producers of Osborne brandy and their supporters. The initial and most convincing defense of the Osborne bull appeared in leading newspaper *ABC* in December 1989. Author Antonio Burgos reaches almost poetic heights in his plea to restore the Osborne bull to what he considered its rightful place as a national icon. In an article entitled "Pardon for a Bull," Burgos (1989) forcefully articulates the case to retain Osborne billboards.

The bull, like so many advertising symbols, formed part of the Spanish countryside. Foreigners take away memories of the Escorial, the Giralda, the Acueduct, the thigh of a dancer in a flamenco show...and the Osborne bull, seen from an air-conditioned bus. In this Spain, which destroys the landscape, which degrades cities, the Osborne bull camped out in the heights of a hill, was a landmark, indicating to us where we were.... Our highways increasingly appear like those of Los Angeles or Frankfurt. They have become impersonal, and there scarcely remains to us the humanity of an inn with some trucks parked at the entrance, which serves unforgettable fried eggs with chorizo. In this Spain, which by jolts and haste is contributing so much to Europe, without receiving anything in return, we must preserve the Osborne bull. Just as bullfights are preserved, although in Brussels they might be upset [*aunque en Bruselas digan misa*]. This bull must

be pardoned and left as an advertising stud, lest we become a colony of Madison Avenue. Although I believe that we already are.

In this op-ed piece, Burgos demonstrates a generally accepted symbolic connection between Spain, on the one hand, and the bull and bullfighting, on the other. It is a nationalistic piece of writing. The references to the highways of Los Angeles and Frankfurt are meant to denigrate the homogeneity and uniformity that supposedly characterize the post-modern world, as exemplified by Germany and the United States. A significant dose of nostalgia pervades the article as well. According to the author, Spanish highways today are almost without personality, compared with those of yesteryear. Everything that has made Spanish highways distinctive—in the full article, the author cites, for example, painted highway signs and quaint truck stops decorated with colorful tiles—all of this has disappeared, except for the bull. That sole remaining mark of Spanish identity, according to the Burgos, must be preserved.

Burgos, moreover, taps into a variety of competing instincts that co-exist among Spaniards today. The author argues in favor of the bull on the grounds of conserving something of Spain's distinctive identity. And yet he is not above pandering to commercial instincts, as with the reference to the favorable impact of the Osborne bull on tourism. Finally, the author argues implicitly for maintaining not only the Osborne bull, but also that which the bull represents: the bullfight. The bullfight, under persistent attack by representatives from the European Union, places the author in a defensive position, as indicated by his dismissive reference to Brussels, seat of the European Parliament. Burgos's argument, in fact, proved effective in that it eventually helped to secure the bullboard's survival.

The legal case brought by Osborne against the Spanish state reached all the way to the Spanish Supreme Court. In December 1997, the Court ruled in favor of Osborne by acknowledging that the bull has indeed become an integral part of the Spanish countryside, that it "has gone beyond its initial advertising purpose" and consequently has become part of the landscape. The actual words of the judicial sentence read:

Objectively considered, it is evident that the figure [of the bull] no longer transmits a direct message to the observer. There is neither text nor graphics to indicate the identity of a product or service, given that the express reference which formerly denoted a designat-

ed type of brandy has completely disappeared. At this time, for the general public which gazes upon it, even with full knowledge of its original significance, it has stopped being the emblem of a brand, and become something decorative, integrated into the landscape. Although indirectly it might bring to mind some symbols of a commercial firm, the first visual impact which is produced upon the great majority is that of an attractive silhouette, superimposed on the environment, which, more than influencing consumption, refreshes the view, commemorates "la fiesta," emphasizes the beauty of the strong animal (Tribunal Supremo 1994).

As a result, the bull was in effect declared a part of Spain's National Heritage. Through declaration by the Spanish Supreme Court, this animal has become essentially synonymous with Spain.

Even now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Osborne bull is the only advertising structure permitted on Spanish roads. And, despite the 1994 Supreme Court ruling, the image of the Osborne bull is still officially the property of the Osborne Group. Subsequent to 1994, Osborne, in several celebrated legal actions, has attempted to sue commercial establishments that have appropriated this widely recognized silhouette without permission. In July 2005, a high court in Seville ruled the Osborne case to be unfounded for the simple reason that that the accused manufacturers were entirely unaware that the Osborne bull actually was the property of any private company. The court declared that only in cases where manufacturers attempt consciously and knowingly to evade the proprietary rights of Osborne does the Osborne Group have the right to file suit (Castiñeira Palou 2006). This legal decision emphasizes just how deeply ingrained and nationally significant the symbol of the bull has become in Spain today.

Central as the symbol of the bull may be, the bull fight, and even bulls themselves, have come under serious attack from several politically active segments of Spanish society. Consider, first, an ethno-nationalist opposition. In Catalonia, large, potentially ferocious bulls have come to represent Castille, that is, to be virtually synonymous with the oft-despised Spanish centrist state. In fact, rightist opponents of enhanced autonomy for linguistically and culturally distinct regions such as Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Galicia, have adopted the silhouette of the Osborne bull as their unifying symbol. The familiar black bull can be found

embossed on everything from baseball hats to coffee mugs. The Spaniard who dons such clothing or uses bull-adorned objects openly and conspicuously is immediately identified with right-of-center national politics.

The symbol of the bull, in fact, has spawned a whole series of complementary regional mascots, designed specifically as signs of opposition to Castilian political authority over the rest of the country. These faunal representations mainly appear in the form of bumper stickers. They include the cow in Galicia, the sheep in the Basque Country, the fox in Andalusia, and, most prominent of all, the donkey in Catalonia. But this is not any donkey. The symbol tries to replicate in silhouette a specific breed of donkey known as the *burro catalán*. A blogger who calls himself Txapulín (2004) points out simultaneous irony and success in the relatively recent Catalan adoption of the donkey as a regional symbol.

### The Typical Bull of Catalonia

Some years back, I discovered that there existed a unique form of ass, known by the name of the *burro catalán* [Catalan donkey]. Someone warned that this animal is in danger of extinction, and, if I remember correctly, a group of people tried to prevent its disappearance.

It looks like the initiative has been successful, because now there are even bumper stickers with the Catalan donkey—an initiative of the youth of Banyoles.... At first, to identify Catalan identity with a donkey is not very comforting, but that is the charm—for those who understand. It is a symbol poised in opposition to the silhouette of the Osborne bull, which we have now seen represented on some Spanish flags. The donkey does not grip us with emotion, like the bull—the myth, the breed, the furious beast. The donkey is a modest, hardworking, patient animal.... [It] is a resistant animal. And there does not exist, perhaps, a phenomenon so strong as this to affirm the humor that we are able to project onto ourselves (Ibid.).

Although bloggers differ considerably on their estimation of the value of the Catalan donkey as ethnic and regional symbol (Bassols 2004), almost all interpret this animal as representing a challenge to the Castilian bull. In the words of one internet contributor (Ibid.), the Catalan donkey “Is one of the best ideas I have ever seen. To invent a donkey capable of

bringing down the bull in order to assert Catalan identity. Congratulations to the inventor...!”

As for bullfights, which have long been a source of controversy (see Cambria 1974), they have attracted increasingly fierce opposition from at least three main sources. Consider first the position of Catalan nationalists. I recall an excursion with a Catalan friend and anthropological colleague, who escorted me in the mid-1980s to a performance of *castellers*—athletes drawn from the general Catalan population who create elaborate, astoundingly tall and precarious human towers, or *castells* (Dalmau 1981). What this colleague did not realize until we arrived was that the performance was scheduled to take place smack in the center of a town bullring. The construction of human towers, within the boundaries of the Spanish state, is a uniquely Catalan art form and symbol of Catalonia (Miralles I Figueres 1981). My companion found the *casteller* performance, situated as it was within what was for him a despised bullring, to be a virtually intolerable combination of theatrical elements. It was so distasteful to him, in fact, that we had to leave before the actual performance had even begun. It is noteworthy, however, that in the 1980s, not long after the death of dictator Francisco Franco, Catalans could still see their way to mounting *castells* within the boundaries of a convenient venue, the bullring. Perhaps the huge influx of industrial workers into Catalonia from the Spanish-speaking regions of Castille and Andalusia exerted some influence in this regard. Participation in local team sports and ritual activities has proved one successful route by which immigrants from other parts of Spain can integrate within Catalan society (Erickson 2008, Miller 2001).

Over the past thirty years, the sources of opposition to bullfighting within Catalonia, together with the growth of separatist sentiments, have developed to the point where a performance of *castellers* within the confines of a bullring is virtually unthinkable. Most Catalans readily declare the bullfight to be a Castilian rather than pan-Spanish custom, and they believe that it should be permanently banned within Catalonia. They also object to public displays of the bull, a symbol of the hated Spanish state, which, under Franco, attempted to obliterate their language and distinctive customs. Consequently, one of the main objectives of Catalan nationalists has been to rid Catalonia of the Osborne bull. A journalist for popular newspaper *La Razón* (Ruiz-Hermosilla 2003) describes the ire that Catalan separatists feel not only for the bull, as a symbol of the Spanish

state, but also for a version of the Spanish flag which bears at its center the Osborne bull, rather than the official seal of Spain. States the author, the enormous success of the unofficial flag, highlighted with the Osborne bull, owes to the fact that “the national flag lacked a popular symbol, because the seal is very complicated; a child could not draw it. The Australians use the boxing kangaroo (kangaroo with boxing gloves); the French, the rooster; the English, the rose; and the Belgians the bear or the rooster, according to whether they are Flemish or Walloons.... Everyone has a hymn, a flag, a seal, and a mascot. We lacked a mascot...” (Ibid.). In 2003 separatists launched a campaign against the Osborne bull. Their initial line of attack was to paint some of the billboards entirely in the colors and pattern of the Catalan flag. They decorated other billboards with white, cloud-like marks, so that the bulls would look like cows (Woolls 2007). Still unhappy with any remnant of this Castilian symbol in their midst, they sawed off the bulls’ legs and, piece by piece, dismantled the inanimate creatures. The last remaining Osborne bull in Catalonia fell in early December 2003.

Catalan nationalists have mounted increasingly vigorous campaigns not only against the bull as a public symbol, but also against the practice of bullfighting. They have garnered a fair amount of popular support in this effort. A survey taken in 2007 revealed that some 81 percent of Catalans oppose bullfighting. (Surveys show that Catalans and Gallegos are the least interested in the sport; Andalusians the most.) Given that bullfights are popularly known as the “fiesta nacional” (Marvin 1988:52), it is hardly surprising that Catalan separatists are particularly opposed to a pastime such as bullfighting. Catalan commentators to the newspaper ABC web site ABC.es/comenta (2006) express a variety of opinions, which accurately reflects political diversity within the complex, urbanized, ethnically mixed population of more than six million that constitutes present-day Catalonia. One reader writes, in a mixture of Castilian and Catalan, “*Coridas en españa si porque son españoles, a catalunya no volem ni espanyols ni toros...*” [Bullfights in Spain, yes, because they are Spaniards; in Catalonia we want neither Spaniards nor bulls] (ABC.es/comenta 2006). As of December 2006, 37 towns and cities in Catalonia declared themselves “anti-aurina,” against bullfighting. Tossa del Mar became the first of these towns in 1989, despite the efforts of one town counselor, who argued that bullfights should be promoted because tourists found Catalan culture to be “sosa,” or insipid.

In Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia and center of most fervent regional militancy, there have been numerous efforts to ban bullfights, none entirely successful. However, restrictions, which would have been unthinkable several decades ago, have been imposed. In 1997, motivated by a growing awareness that bullfights might provoke emotional trauma, the Catalan Parliament declared that children under the age of 14 could not attend these events, because of their violence and gore. Protests ensued, so that by the following year the law was modified to read that 14-year olds could attend only if accompanied by an adult. States journalist Antonio Marzal (2000), “Decidedly, children and bulls do not live together peacefully in Catalonia. I do not know if it’s because we are more civilized than the rest [of the country] or if people are determined to make a ‘no to the bull-’ the mark of our distinctiveness. The former opinion merits respect. The second only laughter.” The writer and journalist Fernando Sánchez Dragó expresses the same opinion by publicly ridiculing the idea that Catalonia is anti-bullfighting. Comparing the bullfight to famous regional culinary dishes, Dragó states, that would be “like considering Barcelona *antibutifarra* or Madrid *anticallos a la madrileña*” (cited in EFE 2007).

Nonetheless, Catalan conflicts over bullfighting have attracted enough negative publicity that bullfighters and fans alike have risen to the challenge. In June of 2007, one of the most highly acclaimed bullfighters of all time, José Tomás, a native Castilian, emerged from retirement to return to the ring. He chose La Monumental, the Barcelona bullring, for his debut. The report in *El Mundo* stated, “José Tomás returned and triumphed. The afternoon in Barcelona was a double vindication: of bullfighting itself and of bullfighting in Catalonia” (Vadillo 2007). Continues the article, “La Monumental was converted into an altar, with the shadow of the Sagrada Familia and Agbar building close by. Everything was full of symbolism: the selection of the Catalan capital was not purely accidental” (Ibid.). Star singers, including the Catalan Joan Manuel Serrat and Andalusian Joaquín Sabina, attended the event, as did theatrical director Albert Boadella and the Duchess of Alba. Reports varied, indicating that protesters numbered between 2000 and 5000 people, some situated inside the bullring, others outside. At a given moment during the bullfight, protesters publicly destroyed cassettes and compact disks of Serrat and Sabina’s music, crying out in unison, “They’ve deceived us!” When *ABC* solicited opinions of whether or not the city of Barcelona should ban bullfights, one reader responded, “This must be the work of that castrat-

ing nationalism imposed on fellow citizens by separatist Catalan philologists...in the finest fascist-anglosaxon-sephardic style of intimidation...” (EFE 2007). So, it appears that for some bloggers even Anglophones and Jews are implicated in the Catalan bullfight controversy. A blogger to the ABC website [ABC.es/comenta 2006] condenses five hundred years of history thus: “First they burned Jews, later the Inquisition burned Catalans, now they kill bulls. In the forties they killed Catalans, Catalan separatists. Spain no, Europe SI.”

Spanish entry into the European Union has complicated the opposition to bullfights, whether in Catalonia or elsewhere in Spain. For decades, Spaniards—located on the margins of Western Europe, ruled by a fascist dictatorship, and suffering under economic stagnation and social retrogression—thought of their country as different from the rest of the continent. “Africa begins at the Pyrenees,” it was often said. (A different version states that “Africa begins at the Ebro,” a reference to the Ebro River which forms the approximate southern boundary of Catalonia.) In the new Spain, where EU standards have given pedestrians the right of way, imposed restrictions on alcohol consumption among youth, and required special facilities and architectural accommodations for the handicapped, a blood sport like bullfighting seems particularly anachronistic. Rapid economic growth, widespread prosperity, and legislation which counts among the most socially progressive in the world (Spain is only one of two European countries with legalized same-sex marriage)—all these and associated developments have radically transformed the Spanish self-image. To a growing segment of the Spanish population, anything that sets the country apart from the rest of the continent is undeserving of preservation.

As part of a campaign to wipe bullfights from their midst, bloggers invoke evolutionary language. For some commentators, bullfight fans exhibit low-grade thought processes. In the words of one commentator, “Bullfights only interest *cuatro retrasados mentales*,” that is, a few mentally backward people (Micrófono 2006). For others, bullfights represent an early stage in the long march towards higher states of civilization. One blogger states, “it is not very logical that, at the heights we have reached, they continue to kill bulls in a city as advanced as ours [ABC.es/comenta 2006].” A representative of the International Movement Against Bullfights calls these spectacles “barbaric shows, and relics of the Dark Ages” (International Movement Against Bullfights 2007). Various commentators on the ABC web site object to bullfights because they have become obso-

lete. States Angel (*ABC.es/comenta* 2006), “I hold nothing against the Spanish and their bullfights but may they do in Spain what pertains to their country. In Catalonia we want to be civilized Europeans.” Writes Antonio from the Andalusian city of Granada (*Ibid.*), “Bloody ‘spectacles’ such as this...should be prohibited in any civilized society. It’s about time [*ya va siendo hora*] that Spaniards should be civilized.” Others state that “The savagery of this ‘cultural demonstration’ [*manifestación cultural*] is only comparable to gladiator fights” (16December 2006). And in the words of yet another (*Ibid.*): “The disgusting and cruel practice of bullfights shames all of Spain. Our civilization demands it: ENOUGH ALREADY WITH THIS BARBAROUS ACT [*ESTE BARBARIE*]. Savagery, barbarism, civilization—all stages in the march towards the twenty-first century, a time in which bullfights are entirely anachronistic.”

A third source of opposition to bullfights comes from animal rights advocates, who apply universal ethical standards and object to any treatment of animals that they consider cruel. One of the most active Spanish organizations in this campaign is the Asociación Defensa Derechos Animal (popularly known as ADDA), to which Pink (1997:13) makes reference. Protesters employ the internet effectively in the struggle to outlaw bullfights. In June of 2006, the internet was used to rally youth to demonstrate against bullfights in front of Spanish Embassies located in at least seventeen distinct countries, including the United States (*latortura.es* 2006). To draw attention to their cause, the demonstrators wore nothing but plastic bull horns and scanty undergarments. The web site *latortura.es* [that is, torture dot Spain] disseminates gory “Videos of Torture,” as it calls them—horrific close-up shots of bulls in agony. Bloggers on this site ask that viewers “download” the videos, “distribute them, and use them to denounce.” Throughout Europe, animal rights advocates, popularly known as ‘animalists’ (in Spain, *animalistas*; in France, *animalistes*; in Italy, *animalisti*) have mounted vigorous anti-bullfighting campaigns. As one blogger puts it, “For an animal like the bull, pain is pain and death is death.” All of this is particularly bad when, as the animal rights activists point out, agony for the animal is drawn out and used as a form of amusement. In the words of one blogger [*peliculaonline.alterworlds.net/showthread.php?tid+1368&page=2*], “LA TORTURA NO ES ARTE NI CULTURA”—Torture is neither art nor culture.

These anti-bullfighting arguments fade in importance when measured against the evident fact that bullfighting appears to be on a steep road to

extinction. Although bullfighting in Catalonia has been grandfathered in and is therefore still permitted, there can be no construction of new bullrings. In Barcelona alone, there were three bullrings at the beginning of the twentieth century. Now, in the first decade of the twenty-first, there is only one. Even as early as 1988, Garry Marvin reported that the number of full *corridos de toros* per year had experienced serious decline from 1974, when 695 were held throughout the country, to 1985, when there were only 377 (Marvin 1988:189). Throughout Spain, young people seem considerably more interested in soccer and basketball than bullfights. Roberto sums up the Barcelona situation when he writes (ABC.es/comenta 2006), “I understand that this topic [bullfights] unleashes all sorts of nationalist reactions, but what really is occurring is that mounting bullfights is not profitable for the proprietors of La Monumental bull ring. Bullfighting is undergoing hard times. I can say that sooner or later this will also occur in cities such as Córdoba and Granada, where fewer and fewer spectators attend...if this is occurring in Andalusia, what will occur in other parts of Spain?” Another blogger concurs (Ibid.): “Very much in agreement with Roberto. Prohibiting bullfights in Catalonia is the stupidest nationalist nonsense. I am a great fan, my father also, my uncles, cousins, etc., but in the following generation, that of my children and nephews and nieces, no one is interested. In Andalusia and also in Madrid there are steadily fewer youth at bullfights.”

Garry Marvin attributes the general decline in bullfighting to a radical transformation of values throughout Spain. Among other values, it is those that refer to gender which he believes have caused the most radical shift in bullfighting sentiment. The bullfight, Marvin believes, thrives on prevalent, traditional ideals of masculinity—courage, self-control, dominance, and the like. As these ideals lost their potency and general applicability within Spanish society, so, too, did the bullfight decline in number and public consciousness. In Marvin’s account, this development occurred with the death of dictator Francisco Franco in 1975. He says (1988:189),

Under Franco’s rule, conditions existed in which the *corrida* could flourish; but there were changes even towards the end of his rule, and now, with a return to democracy, with increasing industrialization, with rapid social change and with the changes in values which are bound to follow, the *corrida* could gradually become a minority interest event. This, combined with the increased cost of mounting

*corridas* for diminishing audiences and the availability of a greater range of leisure-time activities, could mean that they are likely to be held only in their traditional context, that of town celebrations.

As Marvin indicates, even before the European Union was established with the Maastricht Treaty in November 1993, social circumstances had begun to lead to its decline.

Inclusion in the European Union implies an inevitable reaction on the part of participant countries, as well as of regions within those countries, all of which strive to assert their uniqueness. The promotion of tourism and economic growth has much to do with the resurgence of nationalisms and separatist sentiments. And yet, economic growth sometimes depends on the projection of a unified national image. The decline of the bullfight is one consequence of regional identity, economic prosperity, and moral consciousness among other developments that remain to be explored. The persistence of the bull as a symbol of Spain is quite another. Consider the case of Sangre de Toro—literally “bull’s blood”—a red wine widely distributed within the United States. Sangre de Toro is produced by the Miguel Torres company. The full Miguel Torres family name Miguel Torres Vendrell, is unmistakably Catalan. The winery itself is located in Vilafranca del Panedès, just southwest of Barcelona in the heart of Catalunya.

As readers might be aware, the Sangre de Toro bottle is readily identifiable in that attached to the neck is a narrow ribbon bearing the stripes of the Catalan flag. Hanging from the ribbon is a small plastic black bull with white horns. This combination of elements is almost an oxymoron—the Catalan flag together with a prominent bull. The bull might well be anathema to Catalan nationalists. But, to foreign customers, unaware of controversies that prevail within Spain, it has proven an excellent marketing strategy. A wine that hails from Spain, encased in a bottle embellished by the image of a bull, capitalizes on Iberian stereotypes. It is not surprising that, given its reasonable price and distinctive presentation, Sangre de Toro has become a best-selling consumer product outside of Spain. Evidence shows then, that even the bull and bullfighting could become palatable to anti-bullfighting segments of Spanish society if they prove sufficiently profitable.

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