**The Anatomy of a Corrida**

Dissecting and Deconstructing Spanish Bullfighting

"Nobody ever lives their life all the way up except the bullfighters". The plaza, the Fans the matador, and of course the bulls. These rich tiles create a beautiful and brutal mosaic called a *corrida*. Considered the national festival of Spain, A *Corrida* is a multipart cultural experience that can’t exactly be relegated to a mere sporting event. Depending on who you ask, a bullfight can be many things. To some it’s a mystic ritual soaked with catholic undertones, others view it as a link to the past, and some simply see it as a unique social activity tied to their Spanish identity. One thing that ties all these perspectives together is an intense prevailing emotion attached to the sand pitch and those who use it as their stage.

Bullfighting’s history is rich and storied. Legends and customs have been solidified and passed down for generations. Despite this, education on the practice isn’t accessible or abundant in 2024. The bullfighting ecosystem or *tauromaquia* uses a vocabulary of unique terms and titles that may sound like gibberish even to the most seasoned Spanish speakers. Due to the many rules and rituals performed by its cast of characters, a corrida can be a confusing to those unfamiliar with its structure and purpose. The complexities of the practice along with moral questions surrounding the climactic act of slaying a bull have led to both a declining interest from the public, and negative attention from animal rights activists.

Despite this, Bullfighting prevails. Two times a year, the plaza opens its iron gates and spectators crowd into the concrete seats of the Valencia Plaza de Toros. Locals and tourists alike gather to break bread, cheer, and sing, all while watching the sacred dance between the matador and the toro bravo. Entering the Plaza de Los Toros on a festival day is an attack on all your senses. Screaming trumpets and drums from the arena band cut through the crowded sonic soundscape, merging with the chatter, and chants of the public fans. The red ring circling the sand pitch immediately draws your eye to the center. And hopefully, all these things are heightened by the fact that you’ve already stopped at a station to get your obligatory \*first\* *canya*. But where this pageantry leads can be jarring to many. After the plaza parade and the beautiful matador outfits are displayed a bull is slayed on the spot and dragged out before the audience... several times.

The chants, enthusiasm, and convoluted ruleset aren’t much different than a Saturday Game Day. But where the average American spectator might be shocked is in the goring and killing of the bull. All the pageantry and tradition get ignored, and the focus becomes the act of slaying the animal. Looking at this, through the lens of a Westerner born in the 21st century leaves you wondering, Why do we do this, and what place does it have in a modern Valencia?