

{ } Bullfighting: arguments against and action against

■ PAGE-HOME	Click on text to the right of a blue box to go to a page-section or to go to another page
■ SITE: MAP	Click on the rail (long blue band at left) to go to page-top: a quick way to reach these links from page-lower
■ PAGE-TRAVEL	This page is wide as well as long. It can't be viewed adequately on a small screen of a mobile device
■ PH DESIGN	Introduction
■ SITE: ABOUT	Courageous men, courageous women, and animals
■ EMAIL	La Route de Sang 1: against bullfighting in France, in French
	La Route de Sang 2: against French bullfighting, in English
	'Taking the offensive'
	The horses: terror and trauma
	Horse disembowelling and bullfighting's 'Golden Age'
	The bull
	The courage of the bullfighters - illusions and distortions
	Bullfighting: the last serious thing in the modern world?
	Bulls, elephants and tigers
	Bullfighting as an art form. Bullfighting and tragedy
	Bullring ballet and bulls vomiting blood
	Bullfighting and comedy
	Bullfighting and 'duende'
	Bullfighting and seduction
	San Francisco Opera, Susan McClary and Carmen
	Cultural stagnation
	Animals: appreciation and abuse
	Bullfighting and mono-culture
	Fadjen, a fighting bull, and Christophe Thomas
	Campaigning techniques
	Three Spanish restaurants
	La Route de Sang: nouvelle route touristique
	Human welfare and animal welfare
	Other forms of bullfighting
	Pamplona: a proposal
	Freedom of expression
	Bullfighting and tourists

Some supporters and defenders of bullfighting

■ Fiske-Harrison: The Baboon and Bull Killing Club
■ Alexander Fiske-Harrison's blog: The Anti-blog
■ Alexander Fiske-Harrison: the bullfighter-comic
■ Antalya Nall-Cain: commentary on the writing of Sarah Pozner, five star fiancée
■ Stanley Conrad and the infant Jesus
■ Giles Coren: Pensées et Réflexions d'un Gourmet
■ Daniel Hannan: the 'tender relationship' of matador-bull
■ The Club Taurino of London: fighting talk
■ A L Kennedy: including ALK on the killing of horses
■ Orson Welles: who changed his mind
■ Michael Portillo, speaker
See also

■ A L Kennedy's 'On Bullfighting'
■ Women and bullfighting
■ Seamus Heaney: ethical depth?
■ Animal welfare and activism
■ Ethics: theory and practice

'Taking the offensive'

There are now many organizations which recognize that bullfighting is being challenged as never before and which intend to defend it. One of them is 'Asotauro,' which gives this momentous declaration at the top of its home page www.asotauro.com:

'A los taurófilos nos ha llegado la hora de pasar a la ofensiva, no dejando ni una mentira sin contestar, ni una falacia sin rebatir.'

'For lovers of bullfighting [literally, 'lovers of bulls'] the time has come to take the offensive, leaving no lie unanswered, no fallacy unrefuted.'

Aficionados refer to a bull which is unaggressive as a 'toro manso' or 'cowardly bull.' I sympathize completely with the 'toro manso' and its unwillingness to fling itself on the lance of the picador, the banderillas of the banderillero and the sword of the matador to provide aficionados with the experiences they think they're entitled to. But what of the aficionado manso, afraid - unable, it seems - to answer arguments? For these people I've no sympathy whatsoever, of course.

From the section on this page on Tristan Garel-Jones: 'I've drawn the attention of many individual bullfighting supporters and bullfighting organizations to this material and received replies - the most common responses amount to 'I'll see what I can do,' - but silence has followed. Not one defence of bullfighting against these arguments. If these people and

Introduction



Blood, Sang (French), Sangre (Spanish)

The bull shown above was killed in the Maestranza Bullring in Seville which features in the opera 'Carmen.' After being stabbed with the lance of the picador, stabbed six times with the banderillas of the banderillero and stabbed with the sword of the matador, the bull was still alive: this happens very, very often. The bull is now being stabbed in the spine with a dagger, the puntilla.

Blood, Sang (French), Sangre (Spanish)

The matador José Tomás drenched in blood, not his own blood but the blood of the bull, during the ritualized cruelty of the bullfight: the bullfight as horror film:



The festival of Ashura, as celebrated here by Shia believers. In this case, the believers are drenched in their own blood. It can't be claimed that the feria, or bullfighting festival, in 21st century Europe is far preferable to this festival of Ashura - it's the bullfighting festival which involves active cruelty.



organizations consider that there are lies on this page, then go ahead and answer them, if they consider that there are fallacies on this page, then go ahead and refute them. Any bullfighting defender who does respond to the arguments on this page will have to follow much higher standards of critical reading and critical debate than Alexander Fiske-Harrison, who did claim to find a lie, a fallacy on this page. His claim that I'd referred to him as 'the acceptable face of Nazism' was nonsensical, and I explain why this is so in the section 'Into the Arena' which begins with comments on bad causes. By his own admission, he'd only read a little of what I'd written about him.

Asotauro's Website shows not the least sign of engaging with difficult anti-bullfighting arguments. Their declaration belongs to what I call the 'word-sphere,' which I describe as 'the world of ringing declarations, facile claims to importance, hollow confidence-building assertions, projections for future success.'

The horses: terror and trauma



Petos ('protective mattresses') of picadors' horses.

Ernest Hemingway, 'Death in the Afternoon.'

'...the death of the horse tends to be comic while that of the bull is tragic.' He relates the time when he saw a horse running in the bull-ring and dragging its entrails behind it, and makes the further remark 'I have seen these, call them disembowelings, that is the worst word, when, due to their timing, they were very funny.' He was writing of the time when the horses of the picadors were completely unprotected. A decree of the government of Primo de Rivera in Spain ordered that picadors' horses should be given a quilted covering 'to avoid those horrible sights which so disgust foreigners and tourists.' This took place in 1929. Note that it wasn't bullfighters or bullfight enthusiasts who called for this protection. If they had, it would have been something in the balance to set against their depravity, but no.

Before that time, it was common - in fact, usual - for far more horses than bulls to be killed in a bullfight - as I explain in The Golden Age of Bullfighting, as many as 40. Disembowelling is uncommon now, for the horses of the picador and the rejoneador or mounted bullfighter.

However, Hemingway was clear about one thing. 'These protectors avoid these sights and greatly decrease the number of horses killed in the bull ring, but they in no way decrease the pain suffered by the horses.' And, in the entry in the Glossary for the pica, the spear with which the bull is stabbed by the picador, 'The frank admission of the necessity for killing horses to have a bullfight has been replaced by the hypocritical semblance of protection which causes the horses much more suffering.' One of the reasons is that 'picadors, when a bull, disillusioned by the mattress, has refused to charge it heavily more than once, have made a custom of turning the horse as they push the bull away so that the bull may gore the horse in his unprotected hindquarters and tire his neck with that lifting...you will see the same horse brought back again and again, the wound being sewn up and washed off between bulls...'

Whether the picadors take this action or not, the objective in the bullfight is to tire the bull not just by spearing it with the picador's lance (although this is far more than 'tiring.' It's a vicious injury.) The objective is to tire the bull also by exposing the horse to the force of the bull. So, horses in the bullfight are crushed against the wooden barrier of the bullring, lifted, toppled, trampled and terrorized, suffering broken ribs, damage to internal organs - treated worse than vermin. The mattress may offer some protection against puncture wounds but not against other injuries and it hides the injuries which are caused.

Larry Collins and Dominique Lapiere in their biography of the bullfighter 'El Cordobes' describe injuries to horses during his 'career' - *this was long after the adoption of the 'protective' mattress*. Internal organs protruded from the bodies of the horses. How were the injuries treated? The horse contractors shoved the organs back and crudely sewed up the wounds. The organs still protruded, though, to an extent. The protruding parts were simply cut off. The horses might well last another bullfight or two. The authors - 'aficionados' - relate all this in a matter of fact tone, without the least trace of criticism or condemnation.

From my review of A L Kennedy's book, **On Bullfighting**, quoting first from the book. She received the help of an aficionado in writing the book, Don Hurley of the 'Club Taurino.' ('This book could not have been written without ... the expertise and advice of Don Hurley.')

A L Kennedy 'Arguments are cited which state, reasonably enough, that the blindfolded and terrified horse is currently buffeted by massive impacts, suffering great stress and possibly broken bones.' She might have mentioned the internal injuries



Blood, Sang (French), Sangre (Spanish)

La Route de Sang

Nouvelle route touristique



More on 'La Route de Sang' below, in French.

Lord Nelson, the victor at the Battle of Trafalgar, amongst other battles, was wounded several times in combat, losing the sight in one eye and most of one arm before being killed at Trafalgar. This is Lord Nelson, who was obviously very well acquainted with death and violence and was no sentimentalist (his harshness could be severe, and inexcusable), on the experience of attending a bullfight:

'We felt for the bulls and the horses ... How women can even sit out, much less applaud, such sights is astonishing. It even turned us sick, and we could hardly go through it: the dead, mangled horses with their entrails torn out, and the bulls covered with blood, were too much. We have seen one bull feast, and agree that nothing shall ever tempt us to see another.'

One of these women is the fictional Carmen, in Bizet's opera. Taking seriously the cruelties of the bullfight must lead to a revision of attitudes to Carmen the woman and to Carmen the opera.

The peto - a protective mattress - was made a legal requirement for the horses of the picadors in 1928. Before the use of the peto - in the bullfight witnessed by Lord Nelson and his men and the bullfights which took place in the setting of Bizet's Carmen, 19th century Seville - the horses were unprotected. In each of these bullfights, far more horses than bulls were killed, sometimes as many as forty. Again and again, the horses died in horrific ways - after disembowelling, trailing their intestines behind them.

This is film of a bullfight which shows the horrific fate of those horses - the gorings, the disembowelings, the intestines hanging down, the dead horses lying in the ring - sights which didn't shock the fictional Carmen in the least, it seems, judging by the love she has for a man who took part in these spectacles and inflicted such suffering.

A contemporary film showing similar scenes of disembowelling

The opera 'Carmen' is based on the novella written by Prosper Mérimée and published in 1845. Prosper Mérimée had already written 'Letters from Spain.' Extracts from 'First Letter: The Bullfights,' which show that his reaction to the cruelties of the bullring was very different from the reaction of Lord Nelson and his men:

'During my stay in Spain I have no missed a single fight, and blushing admit that I prefer a fight to the death to one in which the bulls, their horns padded, are merely tormented.'

On the horses killed in the bullring: Though the horse 'may be losing streams of blood, though its entrails drag on the ground and twine about its legs, it must face the bull as long as it can stand. When it is down to stay, the picador leaves the ring and returns immediately on a fresh mount.'

'When the bull is cowardly and will not take four thrusts of the lance, the accepted number, the spectators, sovereign judges, condemn him by acclamation to a sort of torture—at the same time a punishment and means of reviving his fury. From all sides goes up a cry of "¡Fuego! Fuego!" Then, instead of their ordinary arms, the chulos are given banderillas with firecrackers along the shaft ... As soon as it enters the skin, the amadou lights the fuse: the explosives go off toward the bull, burning him to the quick, and, greatly to the satisfaction of the public, he leaps and plunges. It is, in fact, an admirable sight: this enormous animal, foaming with rage, shaking the flaming sticks, and tossing amid fire and smoke.'

Since its introduction, the peto has protected the horse against disembowelling and other puncture wounds but doesn't spare them the trauma of being hit by a massive animal. The blindfold only spares them the sight of the bull, not in the least the terror of the experience whenever they are forced into the bullring. What can happen to a horse 'protected' by the peto in the bullring:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9_zeDcCLDc

There's a different kind of bullfighting, practised by a bullfighter riding a horse, a 'rejoneador.' Their horses are

which horses also suffer.

Even if a horse is lucky and suffers no broken bones or internal injuries, it can be imagined what terror it will feel when blindfolded and led out to take part in the parade before the bullfight, what terror it will feel when forced to enter the arena to face the bull, what terror it will feel when it hears and smells the bull, and the terror it feels when the bull, in its frantic effort to escape, hits it very hard.

The first film I saw which showed a bullfight included a 'rejoneador,' a mounted bullfighter. (The same film also included horrendous footage of a bull which had obviously hit the wood of the bullring very hard, with a horn hanging off, almost detached, and almost certainly feeling severe pain - even before it faced the lance, the *banderillas* and the sword.) The horse of the rejoneador isn't protected in any way. The intention is that the horse's speed and agility and the skill of the rider enables it to avoid the horns of the bull. Sometimes, the reality is otherwise.

Jeff Pledge, on the methods used by Alain Bonijol, the French supplier of picadors' horses: 'He has built, on a pair of wheels from some piece of farm machinery, a kind of heavy-duty *carretón*, which has a pole with a flat plate on the end sticking out the front. Several hefty blokes shove it into the horse, who is wearing his *peto*, and try to push him over or back ...' (*La Divisa*, the journal of the Club Taurino of London.) This gives information not just about training methods but about the hideous mentality of these people.

Since it's necessary, as bullfight apologists admit, to injure horses in order to have a bullfight, why, then - abolish the bullfight, and as soon as possible too, and not only for the sake of the horses. Catalonia has shown the way.

Horses in human service have suffered horrifically, and continue to do so. This is some necessary context for the horrific suffering of horses in the bullring:

Hugh Boustead, a South African officer, of an experience during the Battle of the Somme in the First World War. (Quoted in 'Somme,' by Martin Gilbert):

'Dead and dying horses, split by shellfire with bursting entrails and torn limbs, lay astride the road that led to battle. Their fallen riders stared into the weeping skies.'

Dennis Wheatley, describing an aerial bombing attack on the Western Front in December 1915 in his book 'Officer and Temporary Gentleman.'

'When the bombs had ceased falling we went over to see what damage had been done. I saw my first dead man twisted up beneath a wagon where he had evidently tried to take shelter; but we had not sustained many human casualties. The horses were another matter. There were dead ones lying all over the place and scores of others were floundering and screaming with broken legs, terrible neck wounds or their entrails hanging out. We went back for our pistols and spent the next hour putting the poor, seriously injured brutes out of their misery by shooting them through the head. To do this we had to wade ankle deep through blood and guts. That night we lost over 100 horses.'

Without horses, or similar animals, no developed human civilization was possible. Before the modern era, their role in carrying loads (as pack-horses), pulling heavy loads and carrying riders was crucial, all-important.

Horses of substantial size as well as ponies went down the mines and were used well into the twentieth century. They were stabled underground and lived the rest of their lives underground, in complete darkness or almost complete darkness. From a display at the National Coal Mining Museum: 'To the miners, the pony was a workmate. Together they experienced the same conditions [back-breaking work, breathing in coal-dust] and faced the same dangers [of explosions that mutilated or killed, of drowning when the workings were flooded, and the rest]' After nationalization of the mines, they spent 50 weeks of the year below ground but were given two weeks holiday. A photograph of conditions in an American mine in the early 20th century:



Gratitude, overwhelming gratitude, is the only proper response. The horse: this is a species which has benefited mankind more than any other, which has earned, many, many times over, the right not to be subjected to disgusting cruelty. These facts alone should have made it unthinkable to subject horses to the cruelty of the bullfight. The link between horses and humanity is ancient and central. The tradition of bullfighting is not at all ancient. Bullfighting in anything like its modern form is only centuries old. In France, the tradition is more recent still.

unprotected. A film which shows, not injury to the horse but the repeated stabbing of a bull (in the last four or five minutes of the film) by a female rejoneador, Noelia Mota: the degrading cruelty of contemporary bullfighting, as of bullfighting in the past:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzxDs_4EZmQ

Noelia Mota was practising her 'artistry' in a sparsely attended, minor bullring. A short film showing the first two stabbings only in a much more prestigious place, the Seville bullring which is featured in 'Carmen.'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mui3Het3oA>

These two stabbings are with the *rejones de castigo* ('lances of punishment'). The bull is then stabbed six times with the *banderillas*, as in the standard bullfight. Finally, the *rejón de muerte* ('lance of death') is used to kill the bull. Again, and again, the bull is uncooperative, the attempt ends in failure and the bull is stabbed with the *descabello*, often repeatedly, as in the standard bullfight.

The bullfight I discuss on this page is the 'corrida,' the bullfight of Spain and some other countries, but I discuss very briefly other forms of bullfighting.

I explore the mind of the bullfighter and the bullfight supporter, discussing in detail their conviction that bullfighting is a developed art, that it requires special courage and other deeply misguided views. This discussion of bullfighting gives new information and puts its cruelties in a wide context.

For example, I acknowledge the courage of bullfighters but make clear that this courage is limited, far surpassed by the courage shown, for example, by high-altitude mountaineers and in the war experiences of countless people. I provide some instructive statistics, which show that the risk of being killed in the bullring is negligible.

The sufferings of the horses in the bull-ring have a context: the enormous, never-to-be forgotten indebtedness of humanity to horses in times of war and peace. Instead of this suffering being secondary or of no account at all (the usual attitude of apologists for the bullfight such as Hemingway), it becomes a central objection to bullfighting. The suffering of the horses is often a prominent part of the anti-bullfighting case but I give an extended argument. The section after this, *The Golden Age of Bullfighting*, is about horses in the bullring too. It gives information about the astonishing number of horses killed during bullfights before 1929 but I try to show that this is of far more than historical importance. In this section, I give reasons as to why bullfighting may well have reached its final phase.

The multiple stabbings inflicted on the bull are a matter of common knowledge to opponents of bullfighting. I document and discuss these, of course. An extract from my discussion: 'Alexander Fiske-Harrison saw a bull stabbed three times with the 'killing sword' but still alive, and then stabbed repeatedly with the *descabello*. According to the 'bullfighting critic' of the newspaper 'El Mundo' who counted the stabbings, the bull was stabbed in the spine seventeen times before it died.' Alexander Fiske-Harrison went on to kill a young bull himself, with hideous cruelty. Like this matador, he stabbed it three times with the 'killing sword.' The bull was still alive, with the sword embedded in its back. It too was stabbed in the spine to kill it. The number of blows isn't recorded. I include an extended review of his book *Into the Arena*.

Bullfighting apologists claim that bullfighting is an art rather than a sport, pointing out that it's reviewed in the arts sections rather than the sports sections of newspapers. I expose the artistic pretensions of bullfighting. I quote defenders of bullfighting who have made revealing admissions about the artistic limitations of bullfighting.

In fact, every aspect of bullfighting is shown as limited. Ignore the sick and decadent claims to importance, the romanticized exaggeration, the flagrant myth-making. I don't confine my attention to animal suffering. I argue that the adulation given to bullfighters by bullfighting supporters distorts. The matador Padilla, for example, has been portrayed as a heroic figure. He was injured in the bullring and lost an eye. This is a bullfighter whose recklessness has been extreme. Padilla is still alive - not so Marie Colvin, the journalist who was hit by shrapnel during the conflict in Sri Lanka and lost an eye and who has now been killed by shellfire from Syrian forces.

Abolition of bullfighting is long overdue. Bull-baiting and bear-baiting were abolished in this country in 1835. On other pages of this site, I write about some of the cruelties, abuses and injustices to people which were prevalent before and in some cases after this time, such as the 'bloody code,' which punished a large number of offences in this country with public hanging (two thirds of the hangings were for property crimes) and the sufferings of adults and children during the industrial revolution, in particular the dangerous and back-breaking work of men, women and children in the mines. But the tearing of a bull's or bear's flesh by powerful dogs for public entertainment - the teeth and claws of the bear pulled out beforehand to make it more helpless - was no minor matter. Bull baiting and bear baiting were indefensible and their abolition was

A fact often overlooked is that, even after the development of mechanical means of carrying loads and transporting people, horses continue to play their ancient role today, as uncomplaining, useful - indispensable - beings. In many parts of the developing world, they continue to be as indispensable as they ever were in Europe. Their treatment is very varied. It may be as good as could possibly be expected in desperately poor societies. It may, on the other hand, be vile, with avoidable sufferings - and not only the vicious use of the whip, which leaves so many horses with open wounds and scars. Often, there is the absence of basic care. From the newsletter of a charity I support:

'Across the developing world, thousands of brick kilns in poor villages and towns are churning out millions of bricks to feed a growing demand for houses, hospitals and schools. These blisteringly hot open-air factories are relentless brick-making machines. Desperately poor workers and their horses, mules and donkeys are merely part of that machine. For the workers, kiln life is tough enough, but for their animals, these can be the worst workplaces on earth.

'Temperatures can hit 50 C, yet often there is little water or shade. Uneducated owners don't understand their animals' needs and work them hard as they can under tremendous pressure to meet production targets. Many animals are denied rest on 12-hour shifts that see weary donkeys and horses hauling bricks by the ton across hilly, pot-holed terrain.

'Donkeys, horses and mules working in brick kilns suffer dehydration, exhaustion, hoof, skin and eye problems, and a catalogue of other illnesses. They bear horrific wounds from beatings and from falling down, and struggle with filthy, ill-fitting harnesses and saddlepacks. Sadly, many who fall never get up again. Life expectancy for kiln animals can be dreadfully short.' George Orwell, in the twentieth century, wrote of the ponies in parts of the Far East: 'Sometimes, their necks are encircled by one vast sore, so that they drag all day on raw flesh. It is still possible to make them work, however: it is just a question of thrashing them so hard that the pain behind outweighs the pain in front.' (From 'Down and out in Paris and London'.)

Another dimension - and another, even worse, dimension of horror - comes from the role of animals in war. When cavalry was an active instrument of war, a period lasting millennia rather than centuries - even as late as the First World War, cavalry had a real if restricted role - then horses, like men, were injured and killed by arrows, javelins, spears, axes, musket shot, rifle bullets, were blasted by cannon and artillery, the link between horses and humanity again strengthened by common suffering.

From the enormous documentation available, here is one source.

From Franz Kafka, The Diaries 1910-23:

'Paul Holzhausen, die Deutschen in Russland 1812. Wretched condition of the horses, their great exertions: their fodder was wet green straw, unripe grain, rotten roof thatchings...their bodies were bloated from the green fodder.

'They lay in ditches and holes with dim, glassy eyes and weakly struggled to climb out. But all their efforts were in vain; seldom did one of them get a foot up on the road, and when it did, its condition was only rendered worse. Unfeelingly, service troops and artillery men with their guns drove over it; you heard the leg being crushed, the hollow sound of the animal's scream of pain, and saw it convulsively lift up its head and neck in terror, fall back again with all its weight and immediately bury itself in the thick ooze.'

Although I concentrate here for very good reason on the sufferings of horses, I never at any time forget the human suffering. During the French retreat from Moscow, this was extreme - but an extreme often approached or equalled before and after this time. From David A. Bell's very searching book, 'The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Modern Warfare': 'The men slept in the open, and in the morning, the living would wake amid a field of snow-covered corpses. Lice and vermin gnawed at them. Toes, fingers, noses and penises fell victim to frostbite; eyes, to snow blindness.' The horses' suffering was extreme - but again, an extreme often approached or equalled before and after this time. 'The starving soldiers' were desperate for 'the smallest scraps of food. Some ate raw flesh carved out of the sides of live horses...' According to the historian David Chandler he lost a total of 370 000 men and 200 000 horses.

During the First World War, there was approximately one horse for every two combatants and although horses were not directly targeted, cavalry by now becoming less important, they were still used on a massive scale to haul guns and waggons. About 400 000 horses were killed in the conflict. Many of them died, like the soldiers, by distinctively new methods, by phosgene, mustard gas, chlorine gas. At Passchendaele horses, like many of the soldiers, suffocated in the mud.

There are accounts by soldiers who regretted that horses had been caught up in the conflict. The account of Jim Crow, quoted in 'Passchendaele,' by Nigel Steel and Peter Hart:

'You hear very little about the horses but my God, that used to trouble me more than the men in some respects. We knew what we were there for, them poor devils didn't, did they?' In one of his last letters before he was killed at Verdun, the German expressionist painter Franz Marc wrote, "The poor horses!" On a single day at Verdun, 7 000 horses were killed. At the end of the conflict, the martyrdom of horses was far from ending. Large numbers of them were sold to work in the Middle East and were worked to death.

and bull-baiting were inexcusable and their abolition was necessary.

In countries of modern Europe and the bullfighting countries of Latin America, animals with swords embedded in their backs are made to twist and turn by flapping capes, in the hope that the sword will sever a vital organ and bring about the death of the bull - a procedure which so often fails. Even when the animal is killed by the sword at once, it will previously have been stabbed a minimum of seven times. I believe that bullfighting, which, unlike bull-baiting and bear-baiting, has artistic pretensions, is indefensible in both its Portuguese and Spanish forms and ought to be abolished. But action against bullfighting should be with full awareness of context, the context of preventable suffering, animal suffering, such as the suffering of factory-farmed animals, and human suffering.

I've made every effort to ensure that the information I give concerning bullfighting and the other spheres I discuss is accurate. I'd be grateful if any errors are brought to my attention - and, of course, relevant information not included here, different interpretations of evidence, objections and counter-arguments.

This page gives an introduction to the subject. I give much more space to the arguments against bullfighting, the reasons why there should be action to end bullfighting, than to the forms that action takes and, I argue, should take, although I do comment on some campaigning techniques.

So much writing in support of bullfighting is suffocating in its exclusion of the world beyond bullfighting. I see no reason why my anti-bullfighting page should follow this example. The supplementary material I include goes far beyond the limited world of bullfighting. For example, I give reminders of human courage and artistic achievement which owe nothing to bullfighting and discuss or mention natural beauty, wildlife, wildlife conservation and other topics. The starting point in every case is a bullfighting topic.

La Route de Sang 1: against bullfighting in France, in French / contre la corrida en la France, en français

La Route de Sang

Nouvelle route touristique



Les routes des vins - routes touristiques - la découverte des paysages et des patrimoines matériel et immatériel d' une région, par exemple, l' Alsace.

La Route de Sang (ou La route de la Cruauté), nouvelle route touristique - la découverte des paysages et des patrimoines matériel et immatériel d' une région, le Sud de la France - qui offre soleil, vin, gastronomie, beauté - et la cruauté horrible de la corrida. Bayonne, Carcassonne, Bézier, Nîmes, Arles et autres villes: la honte de la France. La corrida: écrasez l'infâme!

La Route de Sang - aussi connue comme la route de la cruauté - nouvelle route touristique - la découverte des paysages et des patrimoines matériel et immatériel d' une région, le Sud de la France - qui offre soleil, vin, gastronomie - et la cruauté de la corrida. Bayonne, Carcassonne, Bézier, Nîmes, Arles et autres villes: la honte de la France. La corrida - écrasez l'infâme! Beaucoup de monde pensent que la corrida existe en l' Espagne mais n' existe pas en la France - NON!

Une corrida en l' Espagne, Seville: l' art de tuer le taureau.



Even after the development of mechanized warfare and mechanized transportation, horses were used often - in enormous numbers as late as The Second World War. I think of a photo I have of 'The Road of Life.' For 900 days, during the Second World War, Leningrad was besieged by the Germans: an epic story of heroism, and starvation, which accounted for most of the deaths during the siege, at least 632 000 and perhaps as many as a million people dying. With the capture of Tikhvin, it became possible to develop an ice road, 'The Road of Life,' across frozen Lake Lagoda to supply the city. The photo shows gaunt horses dragging sledges across this ice road.

Horse disembowelling and 'bullfighting's 'Golden Age'

In each twentieth century Spanish corrida (bullfight) before 1929, six bulls were killed, as is the case now. In each of these bullfights, how many picadors' horses do you think were killed? One horse per bullfight on average, not as many as one, more than one, much more than one? The answer is shocking: as many as 40 during each bullfight. Disembowelled dying and dead horses, the intestines of horses and the blood of horses made battlefields of the bullfighting arenas.

In these scenes of utter carnage such bullfighters as Joselito, ('a classical purist,' according to Alexander Fiske-Harrison) Belmonte and Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, the subject of the poem by the poet and dramatist Lorca, practised their art. Like Hemingway, the poet and dramatist saw large numbers of these dead and dying horses but found them not in the least important. A pre-Peto film showing the slaughter of horses in the bullring during this period: the horrifying scenes which Lorca and Hemingway witnessed often, the horrifying scenes which took place in the bullfights of matadors singled out for praise by Alexander Fiske-Harrison, Tristan Garel-Jones and so many others. A contemporary film showing similar scenes of disembowelling, but without the 'artistic purity' which for Lorca, Hemingway and others made such a difference. Before the film can be viewed, it's necessary to sign in.

The fate of the picadors' horses in the bullring before the protective mattress or 'peto' was adopted in 1929 is a subject of far more than historical interest. It was revulsion against the slaughter of the horses (not shared by Hemingway or Lorca) which led to the adoption of the protective mattress. But this didn't end the suffering of the horses. Revulsion against their suffering - and the suffering of the bull - is much more widespread now than then. The revulsion which makes a return to conditions before 1929 unthinkable makes it very likely that bullfighting will eventually be abolished. Bullfighting has surely reached its lengthy final phase.

'From 1914 to 1920 was bullfighting's Golden Age,' according to Alexander Fiske-Harrison's blog. In this estimation, he more or less follows Hemingway, who 'placed the Golden Age between 1913 and 1920. In this 'Golden Age' up to 40 horses were slaughtered in each bullfight. Alexander Fiske-Harrison tries to balance the 'artistry' and animal suffering at various places in his book Into the Arena (I don't accept in the least his claims concerning the artistry) and makes his own decision as to their relative importance - a decision which is in stark contrast with my own ideas. I don't discuss the 'artistry' at all here, only the cost in animal suffering, and not the suffering of the bulls (atrocious though it was, and is), only the suffering of the horses. As for the evidence, I make use of the book by Miriam Mandel 'Hemingway's The Dangerous Summer: The complete annotations.' Miriam Mandel has more than enough knowledge of bullfighting and more than enough enthusiasm for bullfighting to be considered an aficionado. This doesn't affect the thoroughness or accuracy of the scholarship in the book, but it does affect my attitude. The book is repulsive, horrible, but invaluable.

The figures given by Miriam Mandel apply to 'The Golden Age of Bullfighting' and to a much, much longer period before 1929: ... many horses—sometimes as many as forty - were killed at each corrida. [bullfight]

A great deal of information is given about the rulings and regulations governing the bullfight. The rulings and regulations which concern the number of horses to be provided for each bullfight reflect expectations about the numbers likely to die at each bullfight. The book gives this information:

'In 1847, a local ruling required that forty horses, inspected and approved by the authorities, stand ready for use in each bullfight. The 1917 and 1923 Reglamentos called for six horses per bull to be fought, with the added proviso that the management provide as many additional horses as were necessary. Sometimes all the horses would be killed and replacements would be hastily bought off cabbies and rushed into the ring.'

The addition of (!) to this last piece of information, about the 'replacements ... hastily bought off cabbies and rushed into the ring' would be understandable but inadequate to the horror.

The scholarly information includes this: 'Perhaps the most important marker of change is the Reglamento (taurine code), which evolved significantly from its early version, drafted by Melchor Ordóñez in about 1847, to the increasingly detailed and prescriptive documents published in 1917, 1923, 1930, and, post Hemingway, in 1962, 1992 and 1996.'

Whatever the number of horses killed in the ring - fewer than twenty, or twenty, thirty or forty - the sight of the horses' blood,

En les villes de La Route de Sang - Bayonne, Carcassonne, Béziers, Nîmes, Arles et autres villes - on peut voir ces spectacles artistiques aussi.

En les arènes anciennes de la France la tradition ancienne de tuer continue - bien sûr non plus des hommes (des gladiateurs Romains) mais des taureaux.



Benh LIEU SONG -
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=48220385>

En les arènes modernes de la France, la tradition ancienne de tuer continue.

De nombreux vins français sont des produits de la Route de Sang mais tous les vins français sont les vins d'un pays de corrida.

Dès que les touristes arrivent à Calais, ou l'un des ports de mer ou aéroports français, ils sont arrivés dans un pays de la corrida.

Paris est la capitale d'un pays centralisé (malgré les régions de la France, très variées), un pays de la corrida.

La corrida: écrasez l'infâme!

La honte de Bayonne, Carcassonne, Béziers, Nîmes, Arles et les autres villes de la route de sang: évitez ces villes ou visitez et protestez au bureau de tourisme!

La Feria en les villes de La Route de Sang est

'La Fête qu' assaisonne et parfume le sang' en les mots de Charles Baudelaire, 'Le Voyage'. Aussi: la feria glorifiée 'Le bourreau qui jouit ...'

Quelle est cette odeur désagréable de La Route de Sang? C' est l' odeur de la barbarie, de la cruauté.

Une vidéo qui montre la barbarie et la cruauté en une ville de la Route de Sang, Saint-Gilles, et un bourreau qui jouit:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?gl=FR&hl=fr&v=N9EJWES7aXs>

Mon site a un classement très élevé dans Google pour de nombreux termes de recherche. Exemples:

bullfighting arguments action against 1 / 547,000
ethical depth 2 / 76,300,000

Autres informations:

J' ai envoyé Des e-mails avec des informations sur le contenu ici à beaucoup de personnes / organisations, par exemple:

BAYONNE, Bureau de Tourisme
Directeur
Adjointe de Direction
Chargée de commercialisation de spectacles.
PAU, Bureau de Tourisme
ORANGE, Bureau de Tourisme
AVIGNON, Bureau de Tourisme
MONTPELLIER, Bureau de Tourisme
CARCASSONNE, Mairie
ARLES, Bureau de Tourisme
SAINT-GILLES, Bureau de Tourisme
DAX Mairie
CERET DE TOROS
L' UNION DES VILLES TAURINES DE FRANCE

(Toutes les villes ne sont pas villes de la corrida mais 'la Route de Sang' est proche. Comme j' ai expliqué, toute la France est un pays de la corrida.)

LONDRES Ambassade française
MANCHESTER Consulat de France

La Route de Sang 2: against French bullfighting, in English

the intestines of the disembowelled horses, the horses in agony, the dead horses, the sights which didn't disturb Hemingway or Lorca, the sights which Alexander Fiske-Harrison overlooked or didn't think too important - these sights aren't going to return to the contemporary bullfight.

Miriam Mandel writes, 'Occasionally one hears reactionary calls for the abolishment of the peto, but modern sensibilities would not allow a return to the pre-peto bullfight that Hemingway encountered when he first went to Spain.

The peto or 'protective mattress' for the picadors' horses 'was first used at a Madrid novillada on 6 March 1927, and it was mandated by law on 18 June 1928.' After the peto was introduced, there was a vast decrease in the number of horses disembowelled and the number of horses killed in the ring, but as I explain in the next section, the horses, there are still horses disembowelled in the ring - the horses of mounted bullfighters ('rejoneador') and the horses of picadors. The peto protects against puncture wounds but not at all adequately against the weight of the bull smashing into it and the peto disguises so many injuries. The horses in the bullfighting ring are still treated with despicable cruelty. It's true that 'modern sensibilities would not allow a return to the pre-peto bullfight' but Miriam Mandel overlooks the obvious fact that modern susceptibilities find unacceptable - repellent - the treatment of horses and bulls in the contemporary bullring. The page gives abundant documentation of this treatment. What was once accepted isn't accepted any longer, except by the supporters and patrons of bullfighting. Many of these wouldn't object in the least if forty horses died by disembowelling at every bullfight, but I'd claim that although there's no such thing as certain moral progress, these people have been left far behind by this particular moral advance.

Two eyewitness accounts of the deaths of horses in pre-Peto years.

This account is by a spectator at a bullfight who was sickened by what he saw: Sir Alfred Munnings. It comes from his autobiography, published in 1955. The account is based on what he saw at a pre-peto bullfight.

'I have sat at dinners given by the American Ambassador in Spain with a titled Spaniard as my neighbour, hearing things of bullfighting not written in books. Have we read in those novels extolling the matador, of living skeletons - once horses - ridden not only to slaughter but in a tawdry procession? Have we read of punching, horning, or weeks of duance between Sundays, with flies crawling over festered wounds, as the victims, not killed, await in the stables NEXT SUNDAY'S SPORT? Watch such a procession, and see some fifteen sorry steeds, doomed, starved, carrying heavy, stuffed out picadors. No wonder the horses are hurled to the ground, overweighted, weak and half-dead.

'Passing the tall archway, I had seen a little white horse. To my surprise it was in the procession, carrying a great picador, and the next thing we saw was the little white horse and another in the ring. This humble white horse stood there blindfolded, his ears stuffed and tied, little knowing what he was there for. Oh, little white horse; Little White Horse!' I kept repeating to myself, as the bull put a long horn right through the little horses neck, just above the windpipe.

'Imagine the fright of the horse, blindfolded and deaf, at the sudden stab. Then the bull, his horn through the neck of the horse began dragging it slowly round with him, the picador dismounting and others in the ring trying to free the horse, now no longer a horse, but a holiday victim, the blood running down its white jaw and neck.

'When cleared, and the picador remounted, the bull charged, hurling man and horse backwards with a crash against the wooden barrier. 'Oh little white horse.' I said to myself and, the picador being rescued, and the bull attracted away, they beat the horse to its feet with blood streaming from a wound in its chest, down its white legs. The time was up for the horses, and the white horse and the other - a starved emaciated bag mare were led out to come in again. The little white horse's end came later. 'The bay, its teeth chattering with fear, having been in before, stood near the barrier below us, the motley red and white striped bandage over its offside eye, its ears stuffed with tow, and tied with what seemed to be old electric wire. The Bull made short work of the bay horning the horse from behind. The picador cleared, and the horse beaten to its feet by red-shirted attendants. There, from the underpart of its belly hung a large protuberance of bowels. With head outstretched a man hauling it along on the end of the rein, another hitting it with a stick, it was led out. 'Not a soul cared, excepting ourselves.

'But what of the white horse? He too was lifted and hurled on his back, to the cheers of the crowd, and when beaten to his feet was stomping on his own entrails, which stretched and split like pink tissue paper.'

This is the account of Prosper Mérimée. It's clear from the full account he gives in 'Letters from Spain' that he liked what he saw. He compares himself to St Augustine: 'St. Augustine relates that in his youth he had an extreme distaste for gladiatorial combats, never having seen one. Forced by a friend to accompany him to one of these pompous butcheries, he vowed to close his eyes as long as it lasted. At first he kept to his word well enough, and forced himself to think of other things; but when the populace cried out at a celebrated gladiator's fall, he opened his eyes—opened them, and could not close them again. From then on until his conversion, he was one of the most passionate enthusiasts about these games.'

He gets this wrong. Augustine was writing about a man called

Some years ago, I visited France. From Alsace, where I travelled some of La Route de Vin, I travelled much further south than I'd originally intended. A main reason was to visit, for the first time, an area where bullfighting takes place. To visit the area not out of simple curiosity but as an activist, as someone who had already studied the subject of bullfighting in detail, who had found it barbaric and repulsive and who had given a great deal of thought to the most effective campaigning techniques.

In the time I had available, I was only able to visit the bullfighting town of Arles. As an individual, I could only do little on this visit. The urge to make a protest was strong. I confined myself to writing messages of protest at six or seven different places on the woodwork inside the arena where bullfighting takes place, and I went to the tourist office and loudly spoke about the barbarity of bullfighting. Since returning to this country, I've phoned tourist offices and arenas and made other protests. Whilst I was in Provence, I came across a circus with animal acts. There were lions crammed together in a small cage. There are parts of Europe, and other parts of the world, where animal acts are banned or surely will be banned before long, since animal welfare is a matter of widespread concern. Provence isn't one of these areas, although there are certainly highly motivated activists in Provence, as in other areas of France.

With the exception of people such as these, in the matter of bullfighting, the level of indifference, apathy and complacency in France is dismal and shocking. Opinion polls which supposedly show majorities of French people opposed to bullfighting aren't evidence that the majority of people feel strongly about it.

France is a strongly centralized country. Even though bullfighting is illegal in the Northern parts of the country, France is a jurisdiction which allows bullfighting: France is a bullfighting country, a country in which bulls are killed in bullrings. As soon as tourists reach Calais, or any of the French sea ports or airports, they have arrived in a bullfighting country. For far too long, the French corrida has been ignored. Many, many people are unaware that corridas are held in France.

To return to bullfighting, towns and other places are very concerned with their reputations. They would rather be known as progressive than primitive, as enlightened rather than barbaric, notable as centres of civilization rather than notorious as centres of unjustified killing and bloodthirstiness. There is some defensiveness in these places, I think, or hope. The campaign to end bullfighting can increase this defensiveness, can even implant the beginnings of shame and self-disgust in the hardened hearts of some aficionados but, most importantly, it has to implant in the minds of the general public an association between bullfighting towns and death and blood, to do damage to the reputation of these places. In this way, it's possible to apply indirect pressure on people who are, realistically, too hardened ever to change, or who have too much to lose to accept change. It's unlikely that a bull-breeder, an employee of an arena or a bullfighter will accept the loss of livelihood.

I don't think that boycotts of bullfighting towns are useful. As a form of economic pressure, they're useless. Nîmes and Arles and other bullfighting towns have a great deal to lose economically if bullfighting supporters stay away. The massive influx of bullfighting supporters into Pamplona brings so much money into the town that attempts to boycott Pamplona are futile. It's claimed that 500 000 bullfighting supporters visit Arles for the Easter festival when the bullfighting season begins. I think it's far more useful for activists to descend upon these places and to make their presence - and their opposition - felt. Some people may do this by staging high-profile protests. I've taken part in protests of this kind in other areas of animal welfare, but there are other, less public, ways of making opposition felt, for those who are averse to taking part in public demonstrations.

As a reminder of the barbarities which take place along this route, this video shows the killing of a bull at the 'Graine de toréros in the village of Bezouze in France. (Bezouze is not far from Nîmes.) The bull is stabbed with the sword within a few seconds after the start of the video (previous stabbings by the picador and banderillero not shown). After four minutes of agony - the agony can't be proved but is surely overwhelmingly likely - the bull dies and is dragged out of the arena. The matador here obviously isn't vastly experienced in the least but again and again bulls take a long time to die after being stabbed by the most experienced matadors - I won't call them the 'best' matadors - as I explain in various places on this page. I emailed the town hall of Bezouze and phoned later and complained to the mayor. The mayor made no attempt to defend the place's support for bullfighting and before long put the phone down.

no gets into being, fighting, nor thinking about a man called Aloysius, not himself. Aloysius went to the arena to watch gladiators fight and kept his eyes shut. When he opened them, 'He saw the blood ... Far from turning away, he fixed his eyes on it ... he was delighted with the contest, drunk with the lust of blood. He was no longer the man who had come there, but he was one of the mob.' People can accept almost any cruelty, can find delight in cruelty and the shedding of blood - at the Roman arena and at modern bullfighting arenas. The moral objections aren't undermined in the least by their passion for bloody spectacles.

Prosper Mérimée's book was published in 1830 but the events he witnessed continued unchanged until the peto was adopted - but horses have been disembowelled and severely injured in the bullring ever since. He wrote,

'The picador, with the lance under his arm, gathers his horse well under him; takes his place exactly in front of the bull; seizes the moment at which the head is lowered for the charge to fix the lance in the neck, and not elsewhere; bears down with the full weight of the body and at the same time wheels his horse to the left, so as to leave the bull on the right. If all these movements are well executed, if the picador is vigorous and his horse responsive, the bull, carried by his own impetus, goes by without touching him. Then the duty of the chulos is to distract the bull until the picador has had time to get out of the way, but often the animals knows only too well which is his real aggressor; brusquely he swings about, makes for the horse at a rush, and runs his horn into the belly, overthrowing both horse and rider. The latter is immediately rescued by the chulos. Some pick him up, others wave their capes before the bull's eyes, draw him toward themselves, and, leaping over the barrier with surprising agility, make their escape. The Spanish bull is as fast as a horse; and, if the chulo is far away from the fence, he barely reaches it. Therefore, the horseman, whose life must depend on the chulos' agility, does not often venture into the middle of the ring; when he does, it passes for an extraordinary feat of daring.

'Once again on his feet, the picador, if he can get his horse up, remounts. Though the poor beast may be losing streams of blood, though its entrails drag on the ground and twine about its legs, it must face the bull as long as it can stand. When it is down to stay, the picador leaves the ring and returns immediately on a fresh mount.

'I have said that the lances can only make a flesh-wound and serve only to infuriate the bull. Nevertheless, the impact of the horse and the rider, the bull's own efforts, above all the shock of pulling up short on his hocks, tire him rather promptly. Often, also, the pain of the lance-wounds disheartens him. At last, he no longer dares attack the horses, or, to use the technical term, he refuses to "enter." By that time, if he is vigorous, he had already killed four or five horses. The picadors rest; the signal is given to plant the banderillas.

When Alexander Fiske-Harrison described the years between 1914 and 1920 as bullfighting's 'Golden Age,' I doubt if he gave the least thought to any other contemporaneous events. When humanity was undergoing the catastrophic sufferings of the First World War, and the influenza pandemic of 1918 - 1919, which killed far more people than the First World War, somewhere between 20 million and 40 million people in all, including vast numbers of people in Spain (the term 'Spanish flu' is often used), was all this outweighed by, compensated by, the Golden Age of bullfighting? Elementary sensitivity should have led him to use a different term or to make his discussion much more complex.

The bull



Before abolition in Catalonia: bull in the plaza 'La Monumental,' Barcelona

There are many, many images and films available on the internet which show the course of a bullfight. I think it's advisable to see some of these images and watch some of the films. None of these films, none of the films distributed by convinced opponents of the bullfight, show untypical 'atrocities,' incidents which are very rare. The bull is never wounded and killed under controlled conditions. Whatever the intention, the lance of the picador, the banderillas and the sword regularly penetrate flesh not at all near the targetted area. The picador's horse may be about to fall as the bull's massive weight charges into it, the lance may sever an artery and blood pulses out. Hemingway mentions the fact that the bull 'may be ruined by a banderillero nailing the banderillas into a wound made by the picador, driving them in so deep that the shafts stick up straight.' When blood pours out of the mouth and nose of the bull, which is often, the sword has failed to cut the aorta (the heart is out of reach of the sword.)

When the bull is about to be killed, it will already have had its back torn open by the lance of the picador and will already have had its back lacerated repeatedly by the barbed banderillas. By

the time of the sword thrust supposed to kill the bull, the bull will have two or three stab wounds inflicted by the picadors and six stab wounds from the banderillas.

The sword often hits bone, or goes deep into the animal but fails to kill. The bull, staggering, still alive and conscious, with the sword embedded in its body - this is far more common than an instantaneous death. A report by Tristan Wood in 'La Divisa,' the journal of the 'Club Taurino' of London, on the bullfighter Miguel Abellán: '... an excellent faena of serious toreo, only for its impact to be dissipated by four swordthrusts.' The excellence and seriousness found here are surely only an aesthete's response.

In the same set of reports, on the bullfighter Morante de la Puebla: 'the swordwork was very protracted.' Or, alternatively, the bull died a very slow death.

From the gruesome, matter of fact accounts of bullfights on the site 'La Prensa San Diego'

<http://laprensa-sandiego.org/archieve/october04-02/sherwood.htm>

'Capetillo received a difficult first bull and encountered big troubles at the supreme moment, requiring 12 entries with the sword.' 'Moment' is very badly chosen. The hideous writer is Lyn Sherwood.

Daniel Hannan, a Member of the European Parliament and devoted aficionado: 'After the banderillas, as the bull stood spurting fountains of blood ...' there was 'a miserable excuse for a sword-thrust into the bull's flank.'

This shocking video shows the bullfighter Antoni Losada stabbing a bull with the 'killing sword' seven times in the bullring at Saint-Gilles, France.

After the 'killing sword' has been used to no effect, a different sword, the descabello, or a short knife, the puntilla, is used to stab the spine, often repeatedly.

Alexander Fiske-Harrison saw a bull stabbed three times with the 'killing sword' but still alive, and then stabbed repeatedly with the descabello. According to the 'bullfighting critic' of the newspaper 'El Mundo' who counted the stabbings, the bull was stabbed in the spine seventeen times before it died. This experience had a lasting effect on his girlfriend, 'her perspective on bullfights changed for ever,' but Alexander Fiske-Harrison went on attending bullfights, went on to kill a bull himself and opposes the abolition of bullfighting.

From my critical review of A L Kennedy's On Bullfighting, quoting from the book. A L Kennedy is watching a bullfight at the most prominent of all bullrings, Las Ventas in Madrid:

'At the kill, the young man's sword hits bone, again and again and again while the silence presses down against him. He tries for the descabello. Five blows later and the animal finally falls.' The descabello, as the Glossary explains, is 'A heavy, straight sword' used to sever the spine.

'I have already watched Curro Romero refuse to have almost anything to do with his bull, never mind its horns. (The severely critical response of a member of the audience to a cowardly bull or a cowardly bullfighter.) He has killed his first with a blade placed so poorly that its tip protruded from the bull's flank...As the animal coughed up blood, staring, bemused, ['bemused?'] at each new flux the peones tried a rueda de peones to make the blade move in the bull's body and sever anything, anything at all that might be quickly fatal, but in the end the bull was finally, messily finished after three descabellos.'

'The suffering of the bull 'left, staggering and urinating helplessly, almost too weak to face the muleta' wasn't ended by a painless and instantaneous death: 'Contreras...misses the kill...Contreras tries again, hooking out the first sword with a new one ...Contreras finally gives the descabello.' So, the sword is embedded in the animal, the sword is pulled out and thrust into the animal yet again, but it's still very much alive, the ungrateful creature. The descabello is hard at work in this book. People who have the illusion that the 'moment of truth' amounts to a single sword-thrust and the immediate death of the bull are disabused of the notion here. More often, the moment of truth is hacking at the spine with the descabello.'

The cutting off of the bull's ears before it's dead - this is less common. What humanitarians these people are! They generally wait until the bull is dead before cutting off the ears! Not always, though. On occasion, they are impatient for some reason and can't wait.

The life and death of the bull are sharply contrasted. The bulls are treated humanely until they arrive at the bull-ring, but their sufferings may begin even before the picador thrusts his lance into them. Sometimes, thick needles have been pushed into the bull's testicles before they enter the ring. This practice is said to subdue any bull, and no wonder.

Too much should not be made of trends. Trends can be harmful as well as beneficial, should be actively opposed in many cases rather than accepted and treated as inevitable. But one trend which can be welcomed is the trend to eliminate displays of public cruelty in countries which claim to be civilized. This has been achieved almost entirely in the case of cruelty to people. In the case of animals, now that bull-baiting and bear-baiting have been abolished, bull-fighting remains a cause to be won - and it surely will be won, eventually. Bullfight apologists found no objection to it, but the public disembowelling of horses was found to be more and more intolerable. The continued suffering of the

norses, the blood flowing from the bull's back, torn in so many places by the lance of the picador and by the banderillas, the sword thrust, stabbing to sever the spinal cord when sword thrusts fails to kill, the bull thrashing in agony, the flow of blood from a bull's mouth as it dies, the long trails of blood and the dark pools of blood in the sand - there will be mounting revulsion against these things, the arguments of bull-fight apologists will sound more and more hollow and bull-fighting will be abolished in country after country. When that happens, it will be a series of victories not for squeamishness and sentimentality but for elementary human decency: a real moral advance. Opponents of the bullfighting who despair of ever making an impact should note the signs that even some bullfighters are beginning to question some of what they do.

The English bullfighter Frank Evans, who has killed many bulls in his long 'career,' has now written that the long-drawn out process of killing, as it so often is, the repeated stabbing, can't be condoned in modern conditions. If the bull isn't killed by the first sword thrust, then it should be shot. This proposal has no chance of being accepted by the vast majority of bullfighters and bullfight supporters. Even if it were adopted, it would still allow the stab wounds inflicted by the picadors and the stab wounds of the banderillas and the injuries to the horses.

The corrida can never be made into a humane spectacle. It simply has to be abolished. Almost certainly, it will be abolished last in Spain. In which bullfighting country will bullfighting be abolished first? We must try to reduce the number of bullfighting countries, we must try to win country by country.

The bullfight entails the transformation of a very powerful animal into a weak animal, by pain and injury. There's no great contrast between the 'illegitimate' tampering with the bull before it goes into the ring, by skewering its testicles with a needle or beating it with sandbags, or any of the other methods used, and the methods which bullfight supporters find indispensable, the stabbings with the pic and the banderillas. All of them have the effect of wearing down the bull. In the third phase, the cape is used to make the bull turn right and quickly left, right and left, right and left, until often it sags to its knees and can barely stand again. Even the bulls which aren't weakened to anything like this extent are still nothing like the animal which entered the ring.

The claim is made by bullfighting apologists that the bull that dies in the bullring is 'lucky.' The claim is made that these bulls have a far better life and a longer life (although not much longer) than the bulls reared for beef, kept in factory farms and slaughtered at a younger age. The claim is made that when bulls are 'tested' for their fighting qualities - the 'tienta' - the bulls which go to the bull ring are much more fortunate than the ones that fail, that will be slaughtered for beef.

Pigs and chickens, both the chickens reared for meat and laying chickens, are very often kept in factory farms but this isn't true of beef cattle in most cases. I can claim to have an exhaustive knowledge of the subject - I've opposed factory farming for a very long time. Animals other than pigs and chickens have been kept in factory farms to a lesser extent, or attempts are being made to factory farm them. In this country, there are planning applications - which are being strenuously resisted - to adopt the hideous 'zero-grazing' system for dairy cows in massive factory farm complexes.

But generally, beef cattle have just as good a life as fighting bulls, grazing in fields. It's true that their life is generally shorter. Fighting bulls are at least four years old when they enter the bullring for the regular corrida, but the 'novillos,' the bulls fought by the apprentice matadors or 'novilleros' are closer in age to beef cattle. When Frank Evans, the British bullfighter, came out of retirement to fight - and kill - a bull, the bull was just two years old. The picture I have is poignant, not for its image of the bullfighter fighting long after most bullfighters have retired but for the bull, not at all a good-looking bull, much slier than a four year old bull, of course - to put this animal to the sword needed even more callousness than usual, I feel.

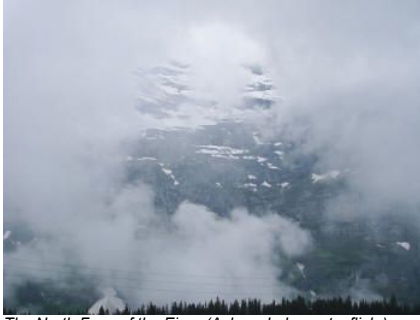
But the arguments of bullfighting apologists which refer to factory farming and the age of slaughter are surely cynical, opportunistic. There's no evidence at all that most of these people are concerned in the least about factory farming and the slaughter of animals.

'Thought experiments' are often used in ethical discussion. They can be used to support or oppose an ethical argument very graphically. In the case of the 'lucky' fighting bull, these analogies suggest themselves. The death of gladiators in the Roman arenas is widely recognized as a blot on Roman civilization - indefensible. The Romans might have developed a system according to which all the gladiators were made up of men condemned to death, volunteering to fight instead of being executed. They had the chance of living for longer, and perhaps much longer. Even if they were beaten in combat, the crowd might spare their lives. What if a contemporary jurisdiction which often executes, such as Texas, proposed to allow condemned men the same chance of living for longer and by similar means?

It would be unthinkable, of course. There's massive opposition to the infliction of death in public. In the history of the death penalty, the trend has been for executions to be public, then not seen by the public, within the confines of a prison, before being abolished altogether. Similarly, if an animal is being slaughtered, then to make a public exhibition of the slaughter is felt to be degrading. Human responsibility towards domesticated animals, and standards for keeping domesticated animals should include as a bare minimum (1) humane treatment whilst the animal is reared and (2) a humane death. These should be regarded as essential, fundamental principles of animal welfare in a modern civilization. Battery chickens are denied (1). They have the benefit of (2) almost always, but not invariably. The bull has the benefit of (1) but not (2). Beef cattle generally have the benefit of (1) and (2). No matter how well treated it may have been before arriving in the bullring, the death of the bull, more often than not far from

instantaneous, preceded by injuries which are likely to be painful or agonizing, is an act of disgusting cruelty that shames Spain, France, Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador.

The courage of the bullfighters - illusions and distortions



The North Face of the Eiger (Acknowledgments: flickr)

In this section, I discuss the risks of mountaineering and some forms of rock climbing, the risks of battle and the risks of bullfighting. I point out that the risks of bullfighting are grossly and grotesquely exaggerated by bullfighters and defenders of bullfighting.

I begin with mountaineering. I was a cross-country skier and I've used cross-country skis in the Alps for downhill skiing. Steve Barnett's book 'Cross-Country Downhill,' mainly about skiing in the Canadian and American North-West, is a fine introduction to its compelling attractions, but my own skiing was much more limited. My rock climbing career, on the other hand, was very brief. The experience of dislocating a shoulder twelve times - not on a rock face - was one of the things that convinced me that I wasn't well suited to rock climbing.

Of course, anyone who takes up mountaineering and climbing in other settings will need to consider very carefully the risks. Many of them are avoidable, but not all.

Edward Whymper wrote in 'Scrambles Amongst the Alps,' 'Climb if you will, but remember that courage and strength are nought without prudence, and that a momentary negligence may destroy the happiness of a lifetime. Do nothing in haste; look well to each step; and from the beginning think what may be the end.'

Edward Whymper is best known for the first ascent of the Matterhorn in 1865. During the descent, four members of the climbing party were killed.

Climbers almost always use modern methods of protection, which include not just climbing ropes but many other sophisticated pieces of equipment. Free climbers don't. The best known free climber is Alex Honnold, shown above. If free climbers fall, almost always they die.

If we compare bullfighting and high-altitude mountaineering, then high altitude mountaineering is far more dangerous than bullfighting, as well as incomparably more interesting, more demanding, and, if you like, more 'noble.' Now, with modern equipment and techniques, it's far less dangerous than it used to be but the fatality rate on high mountains still averages something like 5%. That is, one in twenty of the mountaineers on an expedition will not return. Some mountains have a much higher fatality rate. K2, the second highest mountain in the world, has claimed more than one death for every four successful ascents. Annapurna is even more deadly. Compare the number of fatalities for the tiny number of mountaineers attempting to climb just one Himalayan peak, Annapurna 1, which can easily be confirmed (Unlike bullfighting, Himalayan mountaineering has immensely detailed sources of statistics, such as himalayandatabase.com): 58 fatalities between the successful summit attempt in 1950 and 2007, a total of only 153 summit attempts. (And whereas injured bullfighters have speedy access to modern medical care, the case is very different for injured high-altitude mountaineers. The frostbitten fingers and toes of the two climbers who made the first ascent of Annapurna 1 became gangrenous and were amputated on the mountain without anaesthetic.) To climb Annapurna (a deadly mountain, but not the most dangerous peak) or another very high mountain - or many much lower mountains, for that matter - just once involves a far higher risk of death than a bullfighter faces in an entire bullfighting 'career.'

Reinhold Messner describes the first ascent by the French climbers Herzog and Lachenal, which was also the first ascent of any mountain over 8 000 metres high. Herzog was caught in an avalanche, knocked unconscious, was suffering from frostbite. Along with others in the party, he waded through deep snow back to Advanced Base Camp, in an epic of endurance. To climb K2 or Annapurna or another very high mountain just once involves a far, far higher risk of death than a bullfighter faces in an entire bullfighting 'career.'

France has every reason to feel pride in these and so many other mountaineers, just as France has every reason to feel shame about its bullfighters.

injuries to mountaineers occur not only as a result of falling but from a range of other causes, such as rock fall and avalanches - the snow which makes up the avalanche may resemble the consistency of concrete rather than anything soft and fluffy, capable of causing crushing injuries and multiple fractures. On high mountains, the ferocity of the winds and blizzards often make a rescue from outside impossible until it is too late. Rescue facilities are well organized in the Alps, not at all in the Himalayas and the Andes. Even in the Alps, bad weather can delay rescue for days, or rescue may be impossible. For the mountaineer, safety and medical help are generally far, far away.

An injured bullfighter, on the other hand, can be taken from the ring almost immediately to the bull-ring clinic and then to a main hospital. For this reason, injuries in the bull-ring are almost always non-fatal. And on the other side of the barrera, the low barrier surrounding the bull-ring, lies safety. At all times, safety is so near. Another advantage: a bull-fighter is in the position of danger for such a short time. A mountaineer may be in an area of acute danger for days or weeks. The dangers are not just the ones that result from errors, which are completely understandable, given the enormous demands which the mountains make on the human mind and body. There are also 'objective' dangers, from the stonefalls that occur regularly in the mountains, avalanches, crevasses, other dangers that result from the unpredictability and instability of snow.

When, on the mountain called 'The Ogre,' Doug Scott broke both his legs, safety was far away. The party was caught by a storm and it took six days, five of them without food, to descend. Chris Bonington, also in the party, broke ribs during the descent. Another, now famous, story of magnificent bravery and endurance in the mountains is that of Joe Simpson, which he recounts in his book 'Touching the Void' (available in French, Spanish and many other languages). In 1985, he and Simon Yates set out to climb the remote west face of the Siula Grande in the Peruvian Andes. It was 1985 and the men were young, fit, skilled climbers. The ascent was successful, after they had climbed for over three days. But then Joe Simpson fell, and broke his leg badly. There was no hope of rescue for them. They had to descend without any help. Yates was lowering Simpson on the rope but lowered him into a hidden crevasse. He couldn't hold him and was forced to cut the rope. Simpson wasn't killed by the fall, He managed to drag himself out and drag himself down the mountain, dehydrated and injured, until, at last, he reached base camp.

The Wikipedia entry for the Eiger gives valuable information about the ascents of the infamous North face, shown in the image at the beginning of this section, including solo ascents, the injuries, fatalities, rescues, successful and unsuccessful, stories of courage and endurance which put bullfighting in its place. Since 1935, at least sixty-four climbers have been killed whilst climbing it - compared with the 52 bullfighters who have been killed in the ring in a period of over 300 years since 1700. Taking into account the number of climbers making the attempt, tiny compared with the number of bullfighters fighting in that period, climbing on the North face is far more dangerous.

The Wikipedia information on one summit attempt, made only a few years after Lorca made his fatuous remark about bullfighting being 'the last serious thing in the world.' This attempt on the Eiger, like all the others before and since, was a serious matter by any reckoning. It also underlines the closeness of safety in the bullring, the availability of prompt medical care in the bullring, the lack of these in the mountains, and the fact that it's not only bullfighters who face injury.

'The next year [1936] ten young climbers from Austria and Germany came to Grindelwald and camped at the foot of the mountain. Before their attempts started, one of them was killed during a training climb, and the weather was so bad during that summer that after waiting for a change and seeing none on the way, several members of the party gave up. Of the four that remained, two were Bavarians, Andreas Hinterstoisser and Toni Kurz, the youngest of the party, and two were Austrians, Willy Angerer and Edi Rainer. When the weather improved they made a preliminary exploration of the lowest part of the face.

Hinterstoisser fell 37 metres (121 ft) but was not injured. A few days later the four men finally began the ascent of the face. They climbed quickly, but on the next day, after their first bivouac, the weather changed; clouds came down and hid the group to the observers. They did not resume the climb until the following day, when, during a break, the party was seen descending, but the climbers could only be watched intermittently from the ground. The group had no choice but to retreat since Angerer suffered some serious injuries as a result of falling rock. The party became stuck on the face when they could not recross the difficult Hinterstoisser Traverse where they had taken the rope they first used to climb. The weather then deteriorated for two days. They were ultimately swept away by an avalanche, which only Kurz survived, hanging on a rope. Three guides started on an extremely perilous rescue. They failed to reach him but came within shouting distance and learned what had happened. Kurz explained the fate of his companions: one had fallen down the face, another was frozen above him, the third had fractured his skull in falling, and was hanging dead on the rope.'

In the morning the three guides came back, traversing across the face from a hole near the Eigerwand station and risking their lives under incessant avalanches. Toni Kurz was still alive but almost helpless, with one hand and one arm completely frostbitten. Kurz hauled himself off the cliff after cutting loose the rope that bound him to his dead teammate below and climbed back on the face. The guides were not able to pass an unclimbable overhang that separated them from Kurz. They managed to give him a rope long enough to reach them by tying two ropes together. While descending, Kurz could not get the knot to pass through his carabiner. He tried for hours to reach his

rescuers who were only a few metres below him. Then he began to lose consciousness. One of the guides, climbing on another's shoulders, was able to touch the tip of Kurz's crampons with his ice-axe but could not reach higher. Kurz was unable to descend farther and, completely exhausted, died slowly.

The intensity of the dangers in the high mountains, the fact that these dangers are so protracted, the beauty of this hostile environment - these and other factors have their effect on human consciousness. Anyone who has read enough books about mountaineering and by mountaineers and enough books about bullfighting and by bullfighters to be able to compare the two will surely be convinced that the states of consciousness revealed in mountaineering literature are incomparably richer, deeper and more complex.

What are the achievements of bull-fighters to be compared with the achievements of mountaineers? What bravery has been shown in the bull-rings of Arles, Nîmes, Madrid, Seville, Valencia, Granada, Mexico City, all the bull-rings of the bullfighting world, that could possibly be compared with the bravery shown on Annapurna, Everest, the Matterhorn, the North Face of the Eiger and the other peaks? The summit may be reached or not, but mountaineers have every reason for pride. Bullfighters are obviously very proud of those bleeding, still-warm ears that have been cut from the bull as a mark of their 'achievement.' Revulsion is the only proper, civilized response.

Of all risky activities, none has anything like the bullfighters' highly developed Mythology of Death. Mountaineers tend to be self-effacing and reticent, at least in talking about the dangers. They are acknowledged and mentioned, but there's none of the decadent boasting indulged in by bullfighters, and so for other people who take part in risky activities. During the Winter Olympics at Vancouver, 2010, one of the competitors in the luge event, one of the men and women who hurtle down the ice at terrifying speeds, was killed. The competitors showed restraint and dignity and hurtled down the ice in their turn, without histrionics. The biography of the Spanish bullfighter of a previous generation, El Cordobes, was entitled, 'Or I'll dress you in mourning,' referring to his boast that he would make good in bullfighting or die in the attempt. (Like the vast majority of bullfighters, he didn't die in the attempt.) The book - one I haven't, to be fair, read from cover to cover, only in large extracts - is astonishing. I think particularly of the effusive bullring chaplain holding up a religious medal when it seemed that El Cordobes' histrionic heroics were becoming particularly risky. The English bullfighter Frank Evans has written about the women who are attracted to him because of the supposedly glamorous danger he faces.

A L Kennedy makes a grotesque comparison, in connection with the bullfighter 'El Juli,' who, rumours have it, 'will soon attempt to face seven bulls ... within the course of one day... At this level, the life of the matador must be governed by the same dark mathematics which calculates a soldier's ability to tolerate combat: so many months in a tour of duty, so many missions flown, and mental change, mental trauma, becomes a statistical inevitability. But in the corrida, the matador is not exposed to physical and emotional damage by duty, or conscription - he is a volunteer, a true believer, a lover with his love.' This comes from her book 'On Bullfighting.' I note in my review of the book, '... ten years after she wrote about him and his likely demise, El Juli is still with us, still very much alive, despite the dark mathematics.' John McCormick gives the same argument in the morass of ignorance and falsification that makes up a significant part of 'Bullfighting: art, technique and Spanish society.' He writes of the bullfighter, 'Just as the suit of lights marks him off in the plaza from the run of men, so in his own mind he is marked off always ... The closest thing to it I knew was fear of combat, but that was different too, because there was always the comforting sense of having been coerced.

The difference in toreo lies in the element of choice. Only the toreo chooses freely to risk wounds or death.'

Not true of the volunteers from this country and others who went to fight in the Spanish civil war, such as George Orwell, who was shot in the throat. The merchant seamen who served on the ships bringing supplies to this country during the Second World War were all volunteers. Many of the particularly dangerous missions undertaken in the Second World War were undertaken by volunteers. All those members of the armed forces from Northern Ireland who fought against the Nazis were volunteers - there was no conscription in the province during the war - and obviously all those from the Irish Republic who joined the British armed forces to fight against Nazism, around 38 000 in number. The soldiers of this country who fought in The First World War in 1914 and 1915 were volunteers. Conscription wasn't introduced until 1915. This is an incomplete list, which could be vastly extended, of evidence from before the publication of the book in 1967. Events since would provide further contrary evidence. For example, the soldiers from this country and others who fight against the Taliban in Afghanistan. The men and women who work in bomb disposal, amongst other things making it safe for villagers to return to their villages, are all volunteers. And evidence from other activities before and after he wrote, for example, the mountaineers who risk death in the mountains, practitioners of high risk sports in general, are obviously all volunteers. Again, obviously an incomplete list.

Some opponents of the bull-fight refer to the matador as a coward. This is a clear instance of what I refer to as **alignment**, which involves a distortion of reality. It's also an instance of alignment to claim that Picasso cannot have been a great artist because he was so devoted to the bullfight. Picasso's work leaves me cold, including the overrated painting 'Guernica,' but I recognize his importance as an innovator, his secure place in the history of artistic modernism. (All the same, when I think of his devotion to the bullfight rather than his artistic importance, then

to me he's 'Pablo Prickarsehole.')

The mistake of rejecting achievement because of an objection to the person's personality or one aspect of the work, is discussed in the case of another Spanish artist, Salvador Dali, by George Orwell ('Benefit of Clergy: some notes on Salvador Dali.'). Similarly, to decide that Descartes cannot have been a great philosopher because of his notorious view that animals are automata and cannot feel. Descartes' position as one of the great philosophers is beyond dispute. His 'Meditations' is one of the most attractive works in all philosophy, and certainly one of the greatest works of rationalist philosophy.

To return to the bullfighters, their courage surely can't be in doubt. If fatalities in the bullring are rare, goings and other injuries are not. Nobody who was a coward would choose to occupy the same space as a half-tonne bull with sharp horns, but I think I've established that their courage is strictly limited.

A related issue: the ethics of climbing and the ethics of bullfighting. 'The ethics of bullfighting' here has a very narrow meaning: whether or not the bull is tampered with to make the work of the bullfighters much less dangerous. Better to call it 'code.' The word 'ethics' shouldn't be used in connection with bullfighting. The shaving of the bull's horns is one notorious practice that makes a bull far less dangerous but is commonly practised. There are others. Stanley Conrad who runs what has been described as the 'best' (pro-) bullfighting Web site in the world in English, admits this, in a review of A L Kennedy's 'On Bullfighting: 'the critical issues plaguing the present day corrida - weakened taurine bloodlines, horn shaving and other pre-corrida attacks on the central creatures' integrity...'

Another critical issue plaguing the present day corrida is cited in the routine and otherwise uncritical book 'Bullfight' by Garry Marvin, a social anthropologist, which includes information about one practice which I can't confirm from other sources. If true, it reflects the tawdry dishonesty and corruption of the relationship between bullfighters and journalists in Spain. He writes,

'In whatever novillada or corrida he is performing, it is important for the matador to have preparado la prensa (literally, 'prepared the press', meaning to have paid a certain amount of money to the reporters and photographers who will cover the event), because the reports of a performance can have a considerable influence on the chances of further contracts. If not sufficiently 'prepared', the press can damn a good performance with faint praise or can concentrate on the odd bad moments rather than on the overall performance. If well 'prepared' they can do exactly the reverse and can find good things to say even though the matador might have been booed from the plaza.' The same novillero who had the problem with the festival performed extremely well on two afternoons in a series of novilladas in a town near Valencia. He paid as much as he could to the local newspaper critic, who was also a correspondent for a national magazine dedicated to the corrida. The amount paid was obviously not enough, and he received a few cursory lines in the report. Other novilleros who had not done as well but who had obviously given more money received much more coverage, including several flattering photographs.'

The book is described by the publisher as one which 'explains how and why men risk their lives to perform with and kill wild bulls as part of a public celebration ...' The usual ignorant or shameless overestimation of the dangers to life which I discuss on this page.

Opponents of bullfighting are often pessimistic - how to win a victory against forces seemingly so powerful and entrenched? They should remember, though, that they are opposing something which is diseased.

Breaches of climbing ethics make the mountain easier to ascend, with less danger. They include resting in the rope rather than using the rope purely to arrest a fall, in climbs where artificial aids aren't permitted. Climbing ethics are almost always observed, the 'bullfighting code' very often flouted. Climbers who would like to climb a particularly dangerous rock face don't bring along explosives to make the rock face less difficult and dangerous, but in bullfighting, the most devious practices are common. And the bullfighters, not the climbers, are the ones who will boast of the dangers, of how, in the case of male bullfighters, the vast majority, the glamour of danger makes them attractive to women ...

The 'courage' of bullfighters in the past was the means - the morally obnoxious means - by which a few individuals could escape poverty and deprivation. As the bullfight apologist Michael Kennedy acknowledges in 'Andalucia', the growth of prosperity makes individuals less and less keen to take risks in the bullring. The amounts that can be earned are enormous. A bullfighter may earn more than most footballers in Spain. The financial rewards of climbing are far less - for the vast majority of climbers nothing whatsoever.

The people who run with the bulls at the San Fermin Festival in Pamplona (and similar events) run a risk of injury but most of the injuries are minor. The most common injury is contusion due to falling. There have been fatalities in the bull-run: 15 fatalities in the last 100 years. Given the large numbers of people who take part, this isn't very many. They include someone suffocated by a pile-up of people and someone who incited a bull to charge him by brandishing his coat.

The attempt to claim excellence for bullfighting stumbles upon the fact that two categories essential for these claims, physical courage and artistic achievement, are also categories where humanity's achievements are stratospherically high.

Alexander Fiske-Harrison lets slip in his book 'Into the Arena' the information that between 1992 and the publication of his book in 2002, no bullfighters were killed in the ring in Spain. In his blog, he gives a figure for the number of professional bullfighters

... given a figure for the number of professional bullfighters killed in the last three hundred years: 533. This is one of the lists he refers to, the annotated list of deaths of matadors since 1700:

<http://www.fiestabrava.es/pdfs/MVT-1.pdf>

This document, like the others, omits context and comparison. For example, in 1971, José Mata García died as a result of bullfighting injuries, but would probably have survived if medical facilities at the ring had not been very poor. In the same year, two Spanish matadors were killed in car accidents (a Venezuelan matador was killed in a car accident as well.)

Between 1863 and 1869, no deaths are recorded for matadors. During the American Civil War in just one prison (Salisbury, North Carolina) during a four month period (October 1864 - February 1865) 3,708 prisoners died out of a total of about 11 000. (Information from the 'Civil War Gazette.') This is about a 33% mortality rate. If a similar mortality rate applied to bullfighting, then in one single bullfighting season in Spain there would be markedly more bullfighters killed than have been killed in three centuries of bullfighting.

Or consider this as context for the death of 533 bullfighters in a period of over 300 years: Italian soldiers facing soldiers of the Austrian-Hungarian army. On December 13, 1916 (later known as 'White Friday') 10,000 soldiers were killed in avalanches. Essential background for bullfighting mortality statistics is the frequent recklessness of bullfighters. In the Anti-blog, I refer to Padilla, injured but not killed, who head-butted a bull, obviously very near to the horns, twice. Padilla lost an eye as a result, but in the same year in which more bullfighters were killed in car accidents than in the ring, 1971, a bullfighter lost an eye in a car accident.

The pro-bullfighting Website carrionmundotoreo.com has a page on bullfighting risks written by Michael Cammarata, which includes this: "... toreros are not inherently at risk for many health conditions. Their lives may be complicated by injuries, but death by the bull's horns is rare, they are unbelievably resilient, and healthcare has improved to the point that nearly all consequences or mishaps are manageable.' Penicillin transformed bullfighting. Before its introduction, accidents in the bullring, like accidents on the farm, were far more likely to be fatal.

'In 1997, the Spanish government issued the first Royal Decree significantly pertaining to "sanitary installations and medico-surgical services in taurine spectacles" (Real Decreto de Oct. 31, 1997).' The regulation outlines the facilities which must be available:

'All infirmaries are expected to have basic amenities, including sufficient lights, ventilation, generators for back-up energy supplies, and a communications system. Mobile infirmaries should have a minimum of two rooms; one for examination and another for surgical intervention; however, the standards for fixed infirmaries are higher. A bathroom, recovery room, and sterilization and cleaning room are also necessary. The regulation continues to outline a list of necessary supplies, such as central surgical lamps, tables, anesthesia machines, resuscitation machines with laryngoscopes, intubation tubes, suction, and a cardiac and defibrillator monitor. The responsibility for such materials lies in the hands of the chief surgeon of the plaza.

... events with picadors require the following staff: a chief surgeon, an assisting physician with a surgical license, another physician of any type, an anesthesiologist, a nurse, and an auxiliary person. Events without picadors such as novilladas without picadors, sueltas de vacas, and comic taurine events require a chief surgeon, a physician, a nurse, and auxiliary person. Therefore, the difference is in the assistant surgeon and the anesthesiologist. A plaza de toros has ambulances on site for emergency transports from the plaza to the nearest hospital, during which at least a nurse and physician must be on board the vehicle.

Fatalities to bullfighters may be very rare, but fatalities to the horses used in bullrings don't seem to be nearly so rare - but I haven't been able to find any statistics whatsoever. This surprises me not at all. The bullfighting world seems to consider the welfare of horses completely unimportant. When I found bullfightingnews.com, this news piece was on the Home page, headed 'Diego Ventura [a 'rejoneador,' not a picador] triumphs, but loses his horse to goring.' (He 'lost' another horse two years earlier):

'The star horse "Revuelo" was gored in the right hind quarters, during a performance in Morelia, Mich.

'The goring was deep about 30 centimeters, fracturing the femur. It was reported in several newsoutlets [sic] that the goring was on the left when in actuality it was on the right.

'The veterinarian [sic] that was onsite was looking after the horse trying to see how bad the goring was, with his hand exploring the goring, it was said that when he took his hand out he brought bone with it.

'The horse was losing too much blood, and even though they tried to transport him to a clinic, he succumbed to his injuries.

'The horse, called "Revuelo" was 7 years old and a horse that was used during the placement of the banderillas.

'This is Diego's 2nd loss, his other was in 2009 of the horse named "Manzanarez".

Although bullfighters may be severely injured in the bullring, the

severity of the injuries in warfare, particularly since the introduction of explosives, is of a different order of seriousness. John Keegan writes well about the subject in 'The Face of Battle.' The injury to the bullfighter Jose Tomas in Mexico was a particularly severe injury, but it was one wound, not the severe multiple wounds common in times of war. Bullfighters who have been gored can almost always still walk, they still have the use of their limbs, they can still see. The effect of high explosive, in the current conflict in Afghanistan, in the massive bombardments of the First and Second World War and other wars, can leave the soldier - or the civilian - with a single limb or even none at all, or blinded, or mutilated so much that even advanced surgery can never restore anything like the person's appearance. Similarly in the case of the horrific burns which are common in time of war. Ordinary people in vast numbers have faced these risks, with none of the romanticized myth-making of the bullfighters and their supporters.

The courage of bullfighters is completely eclipsed by the courage shown by innumerable ordinary people in time of war, including civilians. The life expectancy of many soldiers at the Western Front during periods of intense fighting, the life expectancy of new RAF pilots in 1917, was a few weeks. The men who flew in RAF Bomber Command during the Second World War were all volunteers. 55,573 were killed out of a total of 125,000 aircrew - a 44.4% mortality rate. What French bullfighter has had to show a fraction of the courage, has faced a fraction of the dangers faced by the countless, ordinary (or extraordinary) French soldiers at the relentless killing machine of Verdun? Of the 20 million Russian soldiers who fought in The Second World War against the Nazis, well over 10 million were killed. Over half the population of Warsaw died during The Second World War, 800 000 people in all. The risk to life involved in bullfighting is tiny compared with the risks to civilians as well as combatants in much modern warfare.

During The Second World War, this country was dependent upon the convoys bringing food, fuel and other materials across the Atlantic. The merchant seamen who served on these ships were all civilians and all volunteers. Of the total of 185 000 who volunteered, over 30 000 were killed, the majority after their ship had been attacked by a U-boat. The war experiences of the survivors often involved the explosion of the torpedoes, their ship burning from end to end, burning oil in the water, men drowning in oil. These acute dangers were even worse, of course, for the many who faced the long voyage across the Atlantic on oil tankers. The well-developed propaganda machine of bullfighting has never yet faced such realities.

The French author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry had a very adventurous period in aviation and eventually a very dangerous one. He became a fighter pilot for the Free French and was killed in action in 1944. But the mythology of death had no attractions for him. He wrote: 'It is not a question of living dangerously. That formula is too arrogant, too presumptuous. I don't care much for bullfighters. It's not the danger I love...it is life itself.'

Bullfighting: 'the last serious thing in the modern world?'

See also the images and discussion in the section **Lord Tristan Garel-Jones and war, pets, sentimentality**



Hitler and Franco, the Spanish fascist dictator

See also the previous section Bullfighting and 'duende' for more on the supposed superiority of the Spanish attitude to death, an argument often used to justify bullfighting.

The bullfighting audience tends to make clear its disapproval, of bullfighters and bulls, by throwing cushions into the arena, jeering and whistling. I think that the stupidities of Alexander Fiske-Harrison and other bullfighting apologists, their falsification of reality, deserve a strong and robust counter-response. Towards the end of 'Into the Arena' he claims of the bullring, 'And in that ring are all the tragic and brutal truths of the world unadorned.' In the Prologue, he quotes the words of the poet Garcia Lorca: 'the bullfight is the last serious thing left in the world today'.

These words, written in the thirties, when many millions had been left maimed in mind or body by their experiences in the

First world war, when many millions remembered their losses during the Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and 1919 which killed 60 or 70 million people - known sometimes as 'Spanish flu,' on account of its severity in Spain, when the anything-but-trivial movement of Nazism was beginning, were falsified by the seriousness of reality in these and countless other ways then and have been falsified in countless ways in every decade since then, and falsified in countless ways too by the serious achievement or the striving for serious achievement of countless men and women. Lorca's 'the bullfight is the last serious thing left in the world' has the benefit of sounding impressive, to many, but it belongs only to what I call 'the world sphere.' Anyone who reflects on such matters as serious politics, art, culture, the realities of war and the realities of peace, the struggles of everyday life and struggles for survival, will surely realize the extreme falsity of those words. Equally worthy of contempt are the words of the writer and director Agustín Díaz Yanes who declared that 'bullfighters were the only free men left in the world.' (Reported in The Times Literary Supplement blog, 'Tagore in Segovia.'

The material I give on this page of the horrific occupation of Poland during the Second World War and its utterly ruthless Governor, Hans Frank, is a reminder of some realities. To say that the extermination camps in Poland at Auschwitz, Treblinka, Belzec, Chelmno and other places, the crushing of the Jewish uprising in the Warsaw ghetto (some 6 000 burnt alive or dying of smoke inhalation), the crushing of the resistance Home Army in Warsaw, the daily terrors of the long occupation, during which over 5 million Polish civilians died, to say that these and all the other tragic and brutal truths of the world are in the bullring, unadorned, is monstrous and Alexander Fiske-Harrison's endorsement of the lie is monstrous.

During the fascist dictatorship and during the Second World War (Franco kept Spain out of the Second World War but supported Hitler), bullfights took place throughout the bullfighting season, so bullfighting supporters had reason to be content. Spanish bullfighting supporters took pride in their bullfighters and gave them their adulation.

In this country, we have very different reasons for pride, the courage, endurance and sacrifices made by people in this country when it didn't give up or stand aside, like Franco's Spain, but fought against Hitler.

It can be argued that the prominence of bullfighting in Spain now is a consequence of Franco's victory in the Spanish civil war. A note on the place of bullfighting in Spanish society during the Franco era. From Carrie B. Douglass, 'Bulls, bullfighting and Spanish identities:'

Franco and the "Spain" that won the Civil War, the Nationalists, seemed to value the fiesta nacional in a special way. Although Franco was from Galicia, a region without much of a bullfighting tradition, he was a great aficionado of los toros ... Corridos were included in the bundle of images considered to be "castiza" (pure) Spain which Franco and his Nationalist supporters in general patronised. General Franco was often photographed with popular bullfighters ...

'In fact, had it not been for the Nationalists (the Right) during the Civil War the toro bravo and the corridas de toros may well have died out completely ... the Republicans and the political left had been against los toros ... the Anarchists opposed bullfighting totally, calling the corrida a "remnant of medieval cruelty" claiming that it desensitized people to suffering and distracted them from the task of educating themselves.'

From my page A L Kennedy's 'On Bullfighting:'

'The republican Lorca and the nationalists were linked as well as contrasted. They were linked by the cult of death. One nationalist rallying cry was 'Long live death!' Lorca: 'Spain is unique, a country where death is a national spectacle...In every country death has finality. Not in Spain. A dead person in Spain is more alive than is the case anywhere else.' Another republican, El Campesino, again quoted in 'The Battle for Spain': 'I am not pretending that I was not guilty of ugly things myself, or that I never caused needless sacrifice of human lives. I am a Spaniard. We look upon life as tragic. We despise death.'

Massacres on a vast scale have taken place in countries without anything like a death-cult, but the Spanish death-cult faces enormous problems in coming to terms with these massacres - including the massacres which took place during the Spanish civil war.

The Spanish cult of death - not a justification of bullfighting, something to be used in defence of bullfighting, but something which has encouraged and been used to justify human slaughter as well as animal suffering in the bullfight - is a sign of disease, not health. Paul Preston is the foremost British historian of the Spanish civil war. His books include 'The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain,' which documents the slaughter and torture of those years. He estimates that at least 130 000 people were executed by the nationalists during the war but the total is likely to have been much higher. He estimates that just under 50 000 people were killed by the Republicans. Compare the attention given to the 533 bullfighters killed in the ring since 1700 by Alexander Fiske-Harrison. When the town of Badajoz was captured by the nationalists on August 14, 1936, the prisoners were confined in the bullring. Hundreds were killed in the executions which began that night. Soon, as many as 4 000 people were killed.

Alexander Fiske-Harrison's bucolic portrayal of fighting bulls living a life of ease in the wide open spaces of the ranches ignores the history of such places: the misery of the landless poor in Southern Spain regarded with indifference or contempt

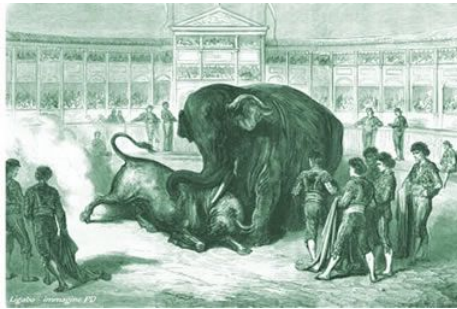
by the landed aristocracy. Land reform was one of the chief proposals of the Popular Front government elected in February 1936 on the eve of the Spanish civil war. Helen Graham, on events early in the war:

'It was a war of agrarian counter-reform that turned Andalusia and Extremadura into killing fields. The large landowners who owned the vast estates which covered most of the southern half of Spain rode along with the Army of Africa [Franco's Moroccan forces] to reclaim by force of arms the land on which the Republic had settled the landless poor. Rural labourers were killed where they stood, the 'joke' being they had got their 'land reform' at last - in the form of a burial plot.

Reforms, and not only land reforms, were crushed with the victory of the nationalists in the war, and large numbers of the landless poor were exterminated. The wealthy land-owners who bred and reared bulls were amongst those who benefitted from the crushing of the legitimate government and its supporters.

The bull-rearing ranches have a very dark history, then. Alexander Fiske-Harrison may be aware of these aspects of Spanish history, but his writing on Spain never mentions them. A wider interest in history, a less exclusive interest in the history of bullfighting, would add perspective to some of his views - or even overturn them.

Bulls, elephants and tigers



In the bullfighting arena: Madrid, 1865

Hemingway, 'Death in the Afternoon:' '...Huron, a bull of the ranch of Don Antonio Lopez Plata ... fought a Bengal tiger on the 24th of July 1904 in the Plaza of San Sebastian. They fought in a steel cage and the bull whipped the tiger, but in one of his charges broke the cage apart and the two animals came out into the ring in the midst of the spectators. The police, attempting to finish the dying tiger and the very live bull, fired several volleys which 'caused grave wounds to many spectators.' From the history of these various encounters between bulls and other animals I should say they were spectacles to stay away from, or at least to view from one of the higher boxes.' The 'other animals' which took part in these 'encounters' included elephants, as in the illustration above.

Hemingway's reservations are only to do with the danger to the spectators. He has no revulsion at the effect of the tiger's teeth on the bull and the bull's horns on the tiger. What might a more detailed account of this 'encounter' have revealed? Perhaps an eye of the bull hanging down by a strip of flesh, its face almost ripped away, the tiger pumping out blood from deep wounds, perhaps with an empty eye socket too. What would a detailed account of the injuries to the bull and the elephant have revealed, when the 'encounter' was at a later stage than the one shown above? It should be apparent to anyone with any moral sense that the Nobel Prize Committee gave its prize to a sadist.

As well as the formal, ordered bullfight, with its three 'acts,' the bull has been pitted against other animals. Why is it that they are unthinkable today? There has been a transformation in human attitudes to animals, so powerful that it has even influenced many, but not all, bullfight apologists. Now, there are more bullfight apologists who would go so far as to condemn the cruelty of a bull fighting other animals but who continue to defend the practices of the bullfight, using supposed arguments which rely heavily upon words like 'art,' 'tragedy,' 'honour,' 'courage.' The fight between an elephant and a bull which seems to have aroused no opposition in the Madrid bullfighting supporters of 1865 would probably be opposed by the majority of bullfighting supporters now. They will find that the transformation of attitudes which has condemned such events as these has condemned the formal, ordered bullfight as well, and has condemned them.

One common justification for the treatment of the bull in the bullring appeals to the longer, privileged life of the bull up until that point. An entrepreneur in Spain could appeal to the same argument in an attempt to reintroduce the combat of elephant against bull. Elephants due to be culled owing to the fact that there's insufficient food for them to be imported into Spain, given five more years of life, in a separate section of bull-rearing ranches, and then made to fight in the arena, speared to make them weaker, any animal which survives for a quarter of an hour to be humanely killed. An arrangement which might appeal to many bullfighting supporters fails because it's no longer within the bounds of possibility. The reputation of Spain, the reputation of Europe, is one consideration among many.

It's becoming ever more clear, if not in every part of Europe and the wider world, that bullfighting diminishes the reputation of every country which allows it and that whatever arguments are brought forward against abolition, its cruelty demands abolition.

More evidence that Hemingway could be disgusting. A 'capea,' as the glossary of 'Death in the Afternoon' informs us, refers to

'informal bullfights or bull baitings in village squares in which amateurs and aspirant bullfighters take part.' Now, Hemingway tells us, 'one bull which was a great favourite in the capeas of the province of Valencia killed sixteen men and boys and badly wounded over sixty in a career of five years.' So, simple enough. The bull was defending itself. The people who were killed and injured knew what risks they were running and there was an easy way to avoid all these risks. After the bull had killed or injured people in its first season, it was allowed to go on for years afterwards.

What happened to this 'great favourite,' also described by Hemingway as 'a very highly valued performer?' The bull's owner sent the bull to the slaughterhouse in Valencia. Two relatives of a someone killed by the bull asked permission to kill the bull, which was granted. The younger of the two 'started in by digging out both the bull's eyes while the bull was in his cage, and spitting carefully into the sockets, then after killing him by severing the spinal marrow between the neck vertebrae with a dagger, he experienced some difficulty in this, he asked permission to cut off the bull's testicles, which being granted, he and his sister built a small fire at the edge of the dusty street outside the slaughter-house and roasted the two glands on sticks and when they were done, ate them. They then turned their backs on the slaughter-house and went along the road and out of town.'

Hemingway was in the vicinity when all this was done, although he doesn't reveal the fact in 'Death in the Afternoon.' There's not the least evidence that he disapproved of the treatment of the bull.

Bullfighting as an art form. Bullfighting and tragedy



The top picture here shows the ancient Greek theatre at Epidauros. (Acknowledgements: cdine's photostream.) The lower picture here shows the Roman arena at Nîmes in France, then part of the Roman Empire. (Acknowledgements: mikeandanna's photostream.) These two places represent vastly different aspects of civilization, at vastly different levels of achievement: one the shameful and diseased dead end, the other the growing point.

A sign in English in the arena at Nîmes gives information about events there in Roman times: "All day long, to the roars of the crowd and the sound of trumpets, the arena staged one show after the other: animal fights, hunts, executions and, topping the bill, gladiatorial contests." French arenas dating from Roman times, such as the one at Nîmes, are used for an activity which is in a clear line of descent from the past: for the spectacle of killing.

The Roman arenas were used for diverse spectacles, all of them brutal and bloody, of course. Gladiators fought each other, very often to the death, gladiators fought and killed wild animals - lions, tigers, bears, bulls, elephants and others - and there were executions, which were sometimes conducted with a degree of depraved 'artistry.' The more thoughtful and artistic spectators could admire the imaginative reconstruction. Katherine E. Welch,

'The Roman amphitheatre from its origins to the Colosseum.'
'... condemned criminals dressed up as characters from Greek mythology ... were forced to perform and, at the performance's climax, were put to death ... The difference between these mythological executions in the amphitheatre and Greek dramas in the theatre were commented upon by Martial as an improvement.'

Bullfighting is very different from the gladiatorial combats against wild animals (the 'venationes') but is clearly descended from them. Instead of a variety of wild animals, the bull is the only animal to be put to death. The death of the gladiator who fought the wild animals in the amphitheatre was very common, the death of the bullfighter in the bullring very uncommon. The more sensitive members of the Roman audience might justify the barbarity they were witnessing with the thought that they were also witnessing displays of skill and courage. More sensitive members of the bullfighting audience at Nîmes and Arles may justify the barbarity they are witnessing with the thought that they too are witnessing displays of skill and courage - and 'artistry.' I examine the 'artistry' of the bullfight here.

It would have been perfectly easy to have made the combat of Roman gladiators into something with claims to artistry just as good as the claims of the modern bullfight, the artistry of both (at the lowest possible level) undermined by their moral depravity. To claim that a practice is 'art' is far from justifying it. If Greek tragedy had developed in such a way that there was the actual death on stage of performers, the emotion of the spectators might have been heightened, but of course at ruinous cost. The Greeks never took this step. In classical Greek drama, when a killing took place it was shown behind the 'skene,' as it was thought inappropriate to show a killing on stage, giving us our word 'scene.'

Italians decisively abandoned this, the worst part of the Roman heritage, but not for a long time after the Colosseum became a ruin. 'In 1332 Ludwig of Bavaria visited Rome and the authorities staged a bullfight at the Colosseum in his honour. It was the first time in more than eight hundred years that such an event had been witnessed, so naturally the public turned out to watch in great numbers, though no one, not even the organisers, seems to have realized that this had been one of the Colosseum's original functions.' Peter Connolly, 'Colosseum: Rome's Arena of Death.'

What have the Italians done with the Colosseum? The Colosseum has been used for something which is imaginative, something which marks a complete break with its past, something in which Italians can take great pride. As another page on this site makes clear, I actively oppose the death penalty, and the Colosseum's new use as a symbol of opposition to the death penalty pleases me no end. When a country abolishes the death penalty or the death sentence of a prisoner is commuted, the Colosseum is lit up. The Roman amphitheatre at Verona is often used for staging opera and other musical performances.

The Romans devised brutal spectacles with bullfighting as the only modern descendant. Greek theatre was incomparably richer, incomparably more important, its descendants incomparably richer and more important: no less than the creation of tragic drama and comic drama, and works, by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes, of remarkable artistry. The range of the surviving works is astonishing, expressing pathos, harshness, human savagery and cruelty, sympathy for the victims of human savagery and cruelty, grandeur, beauty, wonderment, tenderness, gentleness, chance, unexpectedness, parody, crude humour and sophisticated humour, eroticism, fun and mature vision, excess and restraint, and so much more, of course, and so much more than the cramped and primitive world of bullfighting.

The full range of civilization's achievements should be defended, promoted and of course extended - not just civilization's abolition of past cruelties and efforts to abolish present cruelties but so much else as well, including a vast treasure of subtle insights and nuances. I believe that it will always be to the credit of this country that it continued the fight to end Nazism - and also that it decided not to neglect every aspect of civilization which didn't contribute to the country's physical survival. In desperate circumstances, at the low point of 1940, for instance, cultural and scholarly publication continued. Amongst the works published in that year was the ninth edition of the monumental Greek lexicon of Liddell and Scott, the current edition, which enhanced the study of Homer, Thucydides, Aristotle and the Greek dramatists (my own particular interests) and the rest of ancient Greek achievement in words.

If the legacy of the Roman amphitheatre is bullfighting, the legacy of Greek theatre includes, of course, the tragedies and comedies of Shakespeare and other dramatists, and non-dramatic comedy for that matter. If the literary artistry of Greek theatre is its main claim upon our attention and most deserves our admiration, there were other aspects of Greek theatre which came to have enormous influence too. Greek theatre was a spectacle as well as a form of literature, combining words with music and dance. The ancient Greeks never attempted opera - its invention was an Italian achievement - but by their use of music they paved the way for opera.

What aspects of human life and experience does bullfighting leave out? Almost all. The 'artistry' of the bullfight has to be compared with the rich, radiant, complex, powerful, sometimes transcendently beautiful art-works which have been created in painting, architecture, music, literature, the theatre, the ballet and other arts. Schiller referred to the stage as 'Die Bretter, die die Welt bedeuten.' 'The boards that signify the world.'

Hemingway, 'Death in the Afternoon.' 'Bullfighting is the only art in which the artist is in danger of death. I would emphasize a

in which the artist is in danger of death. I would emphasize a different aspect. Bullfighting is the only art form where the artist inflicts suffering and death, the only art form which is morally wrong. Bullfighting is the pariah amongst the arts. Suffering and death have enough power. An art should do nothing to increase it. In other arts, suffering and death are confronted, explained, found impossible to explain, raged against, transcended, balanced by consolation and joy, not inflicted.

Hemingway, 'Death in the Afternoon,' of bullfighting: 'If it were permanent it could be one of the major arts, but it is not and so it finishes with whoever makes it.' Hemingway thinks of bullfighting as a minor art form, then, not a major one. His view of the performing arts - and if bullfighting is an art, then it's a 'performing art' - is open to question. Great performances in the true arts are surely something of major, not minor, significance. What I would assert is that amongst the performing arts, bullfighting is at rock bottom.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, 'The Great Gatsby:' 'The other car, the one going toward New York, came to rest a hundred yards beyond, and its driver hurried back to where Myrtle Wilson, her life violently extinguished, knelt in the road and mingled her thick dark blood with the dust.'

Although the cause of death is technologically advanced, death by motor vehicle, this fictional account seems, at first sight, to resemble the much older world of the Iliad, the Homeric character dying in the dust. When Homer recounts a violent death, he makes frequent mention of dust. One of many examples is Iliad 13: 548.

In her fine introduction to Anthony Verity's fine translation of 'The Iliad,' the classical scholar Barbara Graziosi writes, 'Vivid, painful, and direct, the *Iliad* is one of the most influential poems of all time ... This poem confronts, with unflinching clarity, many issues that we had rather forget altogether: the failures of leadership, the destructive power of beauty, the brutalizing impact of war, and - above all - our ultimate fate of death.' Its many readers 'have turned to it in order to understand something about their own life, death, and humanity.'

I've already given reasons why it's an act of callousness, gross ignorance, contemptible stupidity to think of the death of horses as comic. I focus now on tragedy. Here, bullfight apologists are on no surer ground.

'Tragedy' has a very wide meaning now. Almost all human deaths are 'tragic' apart, that is, from the deaths of very old people. The word has come to mean not much more than 'very sad' and 'very regrettable.' The claim that the death of the bull is tragic goes beyond this. Bullfight apologists don't claim that the death of the bull is 'very sad' or 'very regrettable.' If they did, they would want to avoid the death by abolishing the bullfight. What they are doing is claiming a linkage with literary tragedy. The study of literary tragedy is the essential background to any claim that the bullfight is a tragedy. Certainly, I'd expect bullfight apologists to have done the necessary study, before any mention of the death of the bull as 'tragic.'

Bullfight apologists seem to have a simplified understanding of tragedy, focussing attention on the solitary death of the tragic protagonist, identified in bullfighting with the bull. In fact, very many tragedies don't end with the death of the protagonist. If the protagonist does die, the death of the protagonist may be quiet and uneventful, lacking the distinctive characteristics of tragic death. Other characters may die together with the protagonist, so that the effect of a solitary tragic death is blunted.

I've a familiarity with Shakespearean tragedy but particular knowledge of the tragic writing which inaugurated the whole magnificent tragic enterprise, the tragedy of ancient Greece. It would be difficult to overestimate the importance and the influence of Aristotle's 'Poetics,' despite its brevity, as an examination of tragedy, although tragedy is only one of its themes. My comments here are necessarily brief. Very much to be recommended is reading the 'Poetics.' One accessible version is published by Penguin Classics, with an illuminating introduction by the translator, Malcolm Heath, which will be instructive reading for the average bullfighting supporter, naively convinced that bullfighting is a tragic form and the bull a tragic protagonist. In the brief extracts below, though, I use my own translations from the 'Poetics.'

In the analysis of tragedy, plot is the primary element for Aristotle. He devotes chapters 7 - 14 almost entirely to his analysis of plot. He distinguishes simple from complex plots, claiming that complex plots are superior. Examining the many complex tragic plots which were familiar to Aristotle and which date from after the time of Aristotle, we can appreciate and admire, their lack of uniformity, their very great differences, their subtle differences, the richness of this one part of cultural history: the enormous differences between the fully-achieved tragic worlds of Hamlet, King Lear, Othello, Oedipus the King, Agamemnon, Medea and the rest.

The plot of the bullfight is simple, primitively simple, and repetitious. Bullfighting supporters love the special terms in Spanish which give them the feeling that they are insiders, that they know the meaning of potent special words, one denied to outsiders. So, both Hemingway's 'Death in the Afternoon' and A L Kennedy's 'On Bullfighting' include Glossaries of these Very Important Words. Although an outsider, very much an outsider, I use some of these terms here.

The primitive plot of the bullfight consists of these three 'Acts:'

First Act: *Suerte de Varas*, 'The Act of Spears' in which the bull is stabbed with the lance of the picador.

Second Act: *Suerte de Banderillas*, in which the bull is stabbed with six barbed darts.

Third Act: *Suerte de Matar*, also known as the *faena*, 'The Act of the Kill,' in which the matador kills the bull with a single sword thrust, more than one sword thrust, or by hacking at the spine once or repeatedly.

People who pay money to see one 'performance' will see the *Suerte de Varas*, the *Suerte de Banderillas* and the *Suerte de Matar* repeated six times, since six bulls are killed. Anyone who sees 100 bullfights will see these Acts repeated 600 times.

The overwhelming complexity and richness of the plots of literary tragedy goes with the overwhelming complexity and richness of character - the hesitations, doubts, deviousness, goodness, moral badness, the whole inner life and all the actions of the protagonist and the other characters. Although bulls are varied, 'cowardly' or 'brave,' predictable or unpredictable, with a degree of individuality, Oedipus, Hamlet and King Lear are infinitely more varied, more richly varied, and the tragedies in which they appear are infinitely more varied, more richly varied, than any bullfights. Again, the bullfight is primitive by comparison with a work of achieved literary tragedy. Bullfighting apologists make a great deal of the 'knowledge of bulls' possessed by the bullfighters and the better-informed elements of the audience. But again, this knowledge is surely pitifully limited in comparison with the knowledge and the insight needed to appreciate adequately the masterpieces of literary tragedy.

In the bullfight, the fate of the protagonist, the bull, is rigid and predictable - the bull always dies, except for those rare occasions when pardoned, and everything in the bullfight leads up to the death of the bull. The death of the tragic protagonist which is central to the bullfight plays a less important role in literary tragedy in some cases.

Aristotle hardly mentions death in tragedy in the 'Poetics.' His examination of tragedy was based upon a much greater number of Greek tragedies than the ones available to us, of course. At the beginning of his discussion, he gives a definition of tragedy, which makes no mention of it. The account, including its important terms, require extended analysis. Below, I give particular attention to 'magnitude,' μέγεθος. (Bekker 1449b.20):

'Tragedy is an imitation of an admirable action, which has completeness and magnitude, in language which has been made a source of pleasure, each of its species separated in different parts; performed by actors, not through narrative, and giving through pity and fear the purification of these emotions.'

ἔστιν οὖν τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ
τελείας μέγεθος ἔχουσης, ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ χωρὶς ἐκάστῳ
τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις, δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι' ἀπαγγελίας,
δι' ἔλεου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων
παθημάτων κάθαρσιν.

The surviving Greek tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides are in accordance with Aristotle's discussion: the death of the protagonist is far from being invariable or if it does occur is not necessarily the distinctive tragic death.

A few examples, from each of these tragedians. Aeschylus' 'The Persians' takes place at the court of the Persian king. A messenger arrives to announce the Persian defeat at the hands of the Greeks - this based on historical fact. King Xerxes arrives, a broken man, and the play ends with him a broken man. The first play of Aeschylus' Oresteian trilogy portray the death of Agamemnon, the second the death of his murderer Clytemnestra at the hands of Orestes, but the third play, 'The Eumenides,' portrays the acquittal of Orestes and is without a tragic death. In Sophocles' 'Oedipus the King,' Oedipus survives. When he does die, in 'Oedipus at Colonus,' his death is quiet, not a violent tragic death. Sophocles' 'Philoctetes' has a happy ending. (See my examination of Seamus Heaney's version of the play.) Euripides' 'The Women of Troy' portrays the sufferings of a group of women from a captured city awaiting slavery. The tragedies of the seventeenth century French dramatist Corneille, like 'Philoctetes,' end happily.

The tragedies of Shakespeare do show the death of the protagonist, but although each of these takes place in what is obviously a tragedy, I'd argue that they are not necessarily tragic deaths. deaths with the distinctiveness of tragic deaths. In Hamlet, for instance, the death of Hamlet lacks tragic distinctiveness because it is part of a general blood-letting - Shakespeare to this extent repeating a notorious aspect of Titus Andronicus with vastly greater and more mature artistry. In a short period of time, not only Hamlet dies but Gertrude, Laertes and Claudius. The entire royal family is finished off. The death itself may be strangely muted, at least in comparison with the highly charged and dramatically momentous events which have preceded them, as with the deaths of Othello, Macbeth and King Lear. The death of King Lear has a linkage with the quiet death of Oedipus.

The three 'Acts' which end with the death of a bull, repeated six times in a bullfight, last altogether about a quarter of an hour or a little longer. I write about this time-scale in my page **aphorisms**: 'There are no great theatrical masterpieces which last only a quarter of an hour. They need longer than that for their unfolding, to have their impact.

Aristotle, in the 'Poetics,' wrote that 'Tragedy is an imitation of an action that ...possesses magnitude.' (Section 4.1) The word he uses for 'magnitude' is μέγεθος, and it expresses the need

that the dramatic action should be imposing and not mean, not limited in extent. Aristotle's view here isn't binding, but it does express an artistic demand which more than the so-called 'unities' has a continuing force. The 15 minutes, approximately, which elapse from the entry of the bull until its death are far too little for the demands of a more ambitious art. The complete bullfighting session is simply made up of these 15 minutes repeated six times, with six victims put to death. This repetition doesn't in the least amount to magnitude, to 'megethos.' The scale of bullfighting doesn't have adequacy. The scale of Greek drama does have adequacy. Shakespearean themes needed a drama with still greater scale for adequacy.

The history of tragedy has been very long and eventful, but we have to reckon too with the death of tragedy, or tragedy changed out of all recognition. In contemporary conditions, the tragic sense is modified, blunted, often overturned. We are forced to become critical, to become suspicious.

Contemporary life gives us so many examples of deaths and sufferings which can be avoided, by the advances of science and technology, as well as deaths and sufferings which are brought about by science and technology. In both cases, human decisions, plans and mistakes are fundamental. Deaths in car crashes, like the death of Myrtle Wilson described above, are so often avoidable and easily avoidable - just take care to use a seat-belt, to observe speed limits, and so on. These risks can be lowered by passing suitable laws.

The dangers, sufferings and deaths of the bullfight, we are reminded, aren't eternal, part of the tragic lot of humanity and the animal kingdom, but easily preventable - just ban the bullfight, and they are gone. Although death is inevitable, death at a certain time and place is very often anything but. The only reason why a bull dies in the late afternoon on a certain day at Arles or Nîmes is because the bullfight hasn't been abolished. When we read words to the effect that the bull was 'born and bred for this moment' (the moment of death in the bull-ring - not that the death usually takes only a moment) then we have to protest that this wasn't a destiny, it was far from being an example of tragic inevitability, it was the result of a decision.

Modern scepticism **has** to be taken into account. There's a parallel with the scepticism which illusions bring to sensory experience. Not everything that people see or hear has to be acknowledged as real. Under certain conditions, people can see towers, trees or other objects which don't exist. The fact that some people experience hallucinations, like the experience of optical illusions, lead us to treat the senses with scepticism, suspicion, even if we have grounds for thinking that not all sensory experience is untrustworthy.

Similarly with the intense emotions, intense aesthetic experiences and the pleasure and satisfaction which bullfight apologists claim to experience at a bullfight. They have to be approached with complete caution. Not all emotions are checked by scepticism any more than sensory experience - the emotions of mountaineers not at all, except for those emotions with a clear origin in pathology, such as ones brought on by oxygen starvation. But many emotions, sincerely and uncritically felt, don't withstand scrutiny.

Nietzsche, 'Thus spake Zarathustra,' Part 3: 'For man is the cruellest animal. At tragedies, bullfights and crucifixions, he has hitherto been happiest on earth...' People are denied the intense emotions of a crucifixion for very good reasons: not due to modern squeamishness or sentimentality, but due to a real modern advance. Moral advances in our attitude to animals make the strong emotions of the bullfight just as wrong.

Michael Jacobs, in his book 'Andalucia' is one of those writers who have described the silence before the bull is killed, a time of intense drama - supposedly. He claims that there isn't only 'butchery' in the arena. At times, bullfighting becomes 'one of the more moving and mysterious of human activities.' These intense experiences melt away with just a little attention to the disastrously misguided ethics of the killing. (Completely relevant too is the fact that whilst the audience is appreciating this 'moving and mysterious' experience, the picador's horse may well be shaking, in agony, after being charged by the bull and hit by the bull with full force.)

A comparison: Richard J. Evans, in his 'Rituals of Retribution,' which is concerned with the history of capital punishment in Germany (and one of the most important of all works of 'humanitarian history') gives information about executions in Leipzig in the 1680's, at a time when Bach was composing there. The scene has to be imagined. 'There was a precise order laid down for the procession to the scaffold.' There was often beautiful music to accompany the procession, performed to a high standard (even if there's no record that Bach himself officiated.) One can imagine the malefactor awaiting the blow from the executioner's sword, the silence before the blow fell, the consummate emotion.

These things may have been felt, but they could not be justified. High emotion isn't self-justifying. Of course, the victim may have been guilty of theft rather than murder, may have been innocent of the crime altogether. The silence, the intensity of emotion, were present at the execution of an innocent victim just as at another execution. In modern conditions, in liberal countries, the public beheading of a guilty murderer is unthinkable, no matter what the emotional loss for the spectators, the denial of their opportunity to feel spiritual intensity as the head of the victim falls with the swoop of the executioner's sword.

Intense emotion may be due simply to ignorance, lack of knowledge. Someone who knows nothing about wine drinks a sample and is in ecstasy. With further experience, the memory of the ecstasy becomes embarrassing. The wine was one

the ecstasy becomes embarrassing. The wine was one-dimensional, crude. Someone becomes interested in music and is delighted by a performance or a recording - which become hopelessly limited and crude with the growth of understanding.

These insights can lead not just to an appreciation of the better and the worse within an activity but to the rejection of the activity itself: to the rejection of bullfighting as an activity, in this case. In 'Death in the Afternoon,' Hemingway discusses appreciation of wine, but doesn't allow for the growth of consciousness which would lead to the rejection of bullfighting. Although there can be 'better' matadors and 'worse' matadors, in the opinion of aficionados, bullfighting will be found hopelessly crude in comparison with developed art forms.

George Steiner's book, 'The Death of Tragedy' is concerned with the literary genre of tragedy. He argues that a genre which includes some of the greatest works of literature - including the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, the tragedies of Shakespeare - is exhausted, at an end. I don't agree, but his discussion is interesting.

George Steiner traces the decline and fall of tragedy in detail, and gives various reasons. For example, 'It is not between Euripides and Shakespeare that the western mind turns away from the ancient tragic sense of life. It is after the late seventeenth century.' The seventeenth century marks the beginning of the scientific revolution. 'It is the triumph of rationalism and secular metaphysics which marks the point of no return. Shakespeare is closer to Sophocles than he is to Pope and Voltaire...The modes of the imagination implicit in Athenian tragedy continued to shape the life of the mind until the age of Descartes and Newton.'

There is also the impact of changes in social conditions. 'In Athens, in Shakespeare's England...the hierarchies of worldly power were stable and manifest. The wheel of social life spun around the royal or aristocratic centre.' The tragic heroes of the ages of literary tragedy include King Lear and Oedipus the King. In actual fact, George Steiner does claim that literary works of tragic feeling were created subsequently, but now, tragic death and suffering were democratic. He claims that Büchner's Woyzeck 'is the first real tragedy of low life.' And, 'Büchner was the first who brought to bear on the lowest order of men the solemnity and compassion of tragedy.'

The semi-mythical status accorded to the bull in so many accounts of the bullfighting apologists, the stress upon the bull's power, seem to be an attempt to equate the bull with the tragic hero created before the seventeenth century. In contemporary conditions, this is archaic and cannot work.

A part, probably a large part, of the supposed artistry of the bullfight comes from the work with the cape, the swirling and flowing of the cape. If there were no death and cruelty involved, it might be fine, impressive, like those displays of flag swirling, but by no stretch of the imagination a major art form. Skiers can make beautiful, exhilarating patterns in the snow with their carved turns - and 'extreme' skiers, who can lose their life with one single mistake, are certainly engaged in a far more hazardous activity than bullfighters. The Telemark turn of downhill cross-country skiers '...is so elegant and graceful that onlookers often say it looks like a waltz.' (Steve Barnett, 'Cross-Country Downhill.') I used to be a cross-country skier, with a particular interest in cross-country downhill. But skiers don't generally claim that their turns amount to an art form. I wouldn't claim that in the least.

The technique of bullfighting, such as the action of the wrists, is surely not nearly as subtle, intricate and complex as the technique of a developed skill such as violin playing, which makes extraordinary demands on neuro-muscular co-ordination, not just of the fingers and hand but the shoulder, arm, elbow and wrist, requiring intense, arduous and protracted study. Working at just one aspect of technique (and emotional expression) such as the vibrato, requires long and patient study. (I play the violin and viola.) Both bullfighters and musicians practise, bullfighters, for example, by sticking banderillas into a target on wheels or practising killing with a 'killing carriage' but even amateur musicians are surely practising skills which are vastly more complex than those of the bullfighters. My own studies with the Hungarian violinist Rudolph Botta have left an indelible impression.

The appreciation of music generally demands insights and emotions of a vastly greater range, vastly more subtle and complex, than the appreciation of the crowd at a bullfighting. See my page [music](#). 'The Rough Guide to Spain' on *aficionados*: 'a word that implies more knowledge and appreciation than "fan" - but, I'm sure, far less knowledge and appreciation than that needed for a developed art. In my page on Poetry and Music, I give extracts from the writing of Basil Lam as evidence.

Bullring ballet and bulls vomiting blood

One of the comments on this Youtube video, 'Toro vomitando sangre,' 'Bull vomiting blood'

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7Y194Y7I3M&feature=g-vrec>

'Don't be deceived by your eyes. Just keep saying to yourself, "This is a beautiful art like ballet."'

To many defenders of bullfighting, including this comment-writer on the Youtube film, my revulsion at the blood pouring out of this bull's mouth will seem hopelessly crude and misguided. According to this perspective, the blood and stabbings, including the vomiting of blood after stabbing with the sword, are incidental. not the essence of the corrida: the corrida requires an

.....
 appreciation of nimbleness, agility, dexterity, poise, grace, delicacy as well as strength and above all beauty. Some aficionados regard the corrida as having linkages with accomplished ballroom dancing - bullring dancing - but more often linkages with ballet - bullring ballet. Daniel Hannan writes, 'The Spaniard is watching, not a contest, but a ritualised dance: a relationship so tender and tragic that it might almost be called love.'

I'm completely familiar with this viewpoint. Anyone with any knowledge of the writing of aficionados will be aware of it. But I believe that it's a grossly misleading viewpoint and can't possibly justify the corrida. Treating the violence of the corrida, its spilling of blood as incidental, amounts to active distortion and falsification. No bullfighter can guarantee that he (or she) will kill a bull instantly. A bull vomiting blood is a common, not a rare occurrence.

The focus of attention here is on bullfighters on foot, not mounted bullfighters, 'rejoneadores.' In their case, it's the highly-trained horse which makes the agile and graceful movements. Clicking on this link shows the end result. The hideous photograph shows, in the words of the caption, 'Spanish 'rejoneador' or mounted bullfighter Pablo Hermoso de Mendoza celebrates his kill during his bullfight at the Santamaria bullring in Bogota, Colombia ...'

The agility and nimbleness of the banderilleros are striking, but unlike ballet-dancers, their choreography is subject to powerful moral objections. Their nimble steps take them up to the bull and allow them to evade the bull, but the act of stabbing the bull with the six banderillas is no incidental matter. Hemingway acknowledges the suffering caused by these stabbings, but writes of the bull, 'I keep my admiration for him always, but felt no more sympathy for him than for a canvas or the marble a sculptor cuts or the dry powder snow your skis cut through.' This is aestheticism without ethics, an evasion, the failure to take into account the crucial and obvious difference between canvas, marble, snow on the one hand and the bull on the other: the bull is a sentient being, with the capacity for pain. Alexander Fiske-Harrison acknowledges the pain caused by the banderillas too, but only in his internet writing, not in his book. (His description of his killing of a bull makes it clear that the bull took some time to die: it's not in the least unlikely that this bull too was vomiting blood, like the bull in the film.)

No aficionado makes any claim for artistry in the work of the picador who spears the bull in the first 'Act' of the bullfight, but the injury to the bull, the sentient being, is far from incidental in this case too.

The 'matador,' like the banderillero, does attempt a kind of ballet and of a more ambitious kind. The choreography in both kinds is necessarily improvisational and the circumstances make completely unattainable any developed artistry fit to be compared with ballet. The word 'matador' means 'killer.' Aficionados may prefer to think of the bullring as the stage where the ballet is being performed but the bullring is after all a slaughterhouse. If nimbleness, agility, dexterity, poise, grace, delicacy as well as strength and above all beauty are the essence of the bullfight, then aficionados would find all these qualities in bloodless displays featuring performer and bull. Blood, violence and injury are intrinsic aspects of the corrida, central and not peripheral.

The corrida's linkages with the Roman venationes are obvious. The Romans watched these fights between men (sometimes women) and wild animals in their arenas. If, in Roman times, these fights against wild animals, like the gladiatorial combats in which men and sometimes women were killed, had developed to stress 'artistry,' and Romans had appreciated the choreography of the wild animal killers and the choreography of the gladiators, then the ethical objections to the wounding and killing would be left undiminished.

An aficionado could be described, not just as a person who appreciates the corrida in a 'knowledgeable' way, but as a person who, amongst other things, discounts and evades these intrinsic aspects of the corrida. When aficionados decry, from their superior knowledge, the use of the term 'bullfighting,' they are surely evading a central aspect. Hemingway refers to 'bullfighting' and 'bullfighters' throughout 'Death in the Afternoon,' but some aficionados would be unwilling to grant that Hemingway was an aficionado at all. The back cover of Alexander Fiske-Harrison's 'Into the Arena' mentions 'bullfighting,' 'the bullfight' and 'fighting bulls.' The 'true essence' of the bullfight is described as 'man against bull in a life or death struggle from which only one can emerge alive.' (But this is misleading. The bull is overwhelmingly likely to emerge dead, the bullfighter overwhelmingly likely to emerge alive, despite any impression of comparable risks.) As in the case of Hemingway, Alexander Fiske-Harrison uses throughout his book the terms 'bullfight,' 'bullfighting' and 'bullfighter,' in a way which may well offend refined aficionados who prefer not to associate their art with violence or even with what Daniel Hannan describes as 'contest.'

The account in which Daniel Hannan claims that 'The Spaniard is watching, not a contest, but a ritualised dance: a relationship so tender and tragic that it might almost be called love' also contains this, 'The bull took two pics, the second of which went in repeatedly and way off to one side. After the banderillas, as the bull stood spurting fountains of blood ...' there was 'a miserable excuse for a sword-thrust into the bull's flank.'

I'd prefer to use the term 'bull-stabber' rather than 'bullfighter.' There are three kinds of bull-stabber: the picador, who stabs the bull with a lance, the banderillero, who stabs the bull with barbed banderillas, and the matador, who stabs the bull with a sword. But on this page, I use the established word 'bullfighter.'

Any claim by aficionados that the anti-bullfighting activist is bound to have an 'external,' view of bullfighting, or, as they would prefer, the 'corrida,' that the activist can't possibly understand the world of the aficionado or the matador, is very much mistaken. We're not in the least fated to understand only those things we support and appreciate or to fail to understand those things we oppose. Readers have access to many, many worlds at great (distance) from what happens to be their own world, worlds provided by the great novelists and writers of non-fiction and worlds it's possible to understand by our own insights: the worlds of Anna Karenina, Madame Bovary, Raskolnikov, Malone, of fictional and non-fictional politicians, shopkeepers, financiers, labourers, criminals, detectives and of course so many more worlds - including the worlds of aficionados and matadors.

The aficionado who feels superior to bullfighting supporters who are non-aficionados and very much more superior to opponents of bullfighting relies amongst other things on superior knowledge of the correct terms - 'the corrida,' instead of 'bullfighting,' for example, and may well feel that correcting the misconceptions of others amounts to a confirmation of the importance and legitimacy of the activity - not so. The aficionado has a knowledge of these terms, and many more (the quotation is from 'Into the Arena,' Chapter 17):

'Using the language of the first matador, Pedro Romero, you need *parar*, *templar* and *mandar*. *Parar* means 'to stop' or 'to stake' - as in poker - and refers to the matador standing his ground. *Templar* means 'to temper' or 'to tune', adjusting the cape to the bull's charge and / or adjusting the bull's charge with the cape. *Mandar* means 'to send', with the sense of command, and refers to sending the bull safely away from the body to the place of your choosing.' There follows a discussion of a further term, *cargar la suerte*, which he translates as 'to load the dice'. (The Club Taurino of London proudly displays these terms on the Home Page of its Website.)

John Gordon's account 'Morante de la Puebla: my *Morantismo*, his Tauromaquia' (published by the Club Taurino of London in 'La Divisa') is a fairly representative account of intricate and technical aficionado writing, more so than anything in Alexander Fiske-Harrison's book, or Hemingway's, for that matter. An instructive quotation: '... not only are his molinetes quite belmontinos, but his kikirikis are reminiscent of Gallito and his naturales de frente are his particular tribute to the post-war toreo of Manolo Vázquez.' He has an aesthete's as well as a technician's viewpoint, assessing the 'technical and aesthetic' performance of the matador Morante, commenting amongst other things on the common passes and the less common passes, including the 'media chicuendina.' He discusses named individual passes and the linkage ('ligazón') of passes [not an aspect of linkage which appeals to me at all], and the various actions, such as swivelling, pivoting, leaning, the shifting of weight.

Tristan Wood, also writing in 'La Divisa, in a very matter of fact way about another bullfighter: ' 'At Barcarrota, he [José Luis Moreno] gave his opening Sepúlveda toro some decent verónicas [passes with the cape, the caape held up in front with both hands] before watching it savage the picador's horse in a huge derribo, [knocking over] the bull rolling the caballo [horse] as it lay on the ground and inflicting a cornada [horn wound] in its right flank.' Tristan Wood is the author of 'How to watch a bullfight.'

As soon as it's realized that watching gladiators fight to the death in the Roman arena would no more be legitimated by technical terms and 'knowledge' than bullfighting (or the 'corrida') then the aficionado's pride and status are suddenly shown to be without any foundation. If the Romans had developed the 'aesthetic' aspect of gladiator-fighting and had developed 'artistic' moves, instead of stressing brute force, skill and courage, then the {separation} of the aesthetic and the ethical would be clear (I don't of course deny that there are linkages.)

John Gordon notes that 'Morante is very poor with the sword in his hand, and this is surely the most mediocre side of his toreo. It is only necessary to watch the way he lines up for the kill, his right arm seemingly contorted and in the wrong place. What is worse, he goes "out" away from the bull before he has even reached the jurisdiction of the morrillo. [morrillo: the large muscle mass in the region of the bull's neck.] Ultimately, there is a lack of conviction when he goes in for the swordthrust, and, when one does not enter believing that the sword will go in, more often than not, the result will be a pinchazo.' A pinchazo is the term for the sword hitting bone. There may be repeated pinchazos and when at last the sword sinks into the bull without hitting bone, the bull may not be killed. John Gordon writes purely as an aesthete, completely indifferent, it seems, to the fact that the bulls Morante attempts to kill so badly will be suffering intensely. He refers to 'the delicate grace that underlines his aesthetic personality.' John Gordon's account, like the account of other aficionados, is subject to extreme {restriction}. It takes no note of the moral dimension. In the same way, the gourmet-aesthete finds some foie-gras 'mediocre,' some, allegedly, 'heavenly,' and can supply some plausible taste-terms, without giving any thought to the moral dimension.

It's often argued that aficionados deplore some common events in the bullring - bulls left weak or almost helpless when they have been lanced by the picador too vigorously, bulls which take a long time to die when the killing sword is used. Their objections have nothing to do with humanitarian ethics at all. They are simply thinking of their own enjoyment, with the limited perspective of the aesthete rather than a moral being. It would be possible to eliminate tampering with the bull before it enters the ring but once it's in the ring, it's impossible to eliminate these absolutely common events, since the picadors, banderilleros and matadors are never able to stab the bull in the 'correct' places, in the conditions of the bullfight and even if they were moral

the existence of the bullfight, and even if they were, most objections would remain.

Aficionados' knowledge of the bullfight and its technical terms, the much lesser knowledge of almost all opponents of bullfighting, prove nothing about the moral status of the bullfight. If an opponent, unlike the aficionado, is unaware that the sword thrust is intended to pierce the aorta of the bull not its heart and is unaware that the sword thrust is called an 'estocada,' unless it hits bone, in which case the term is 'pinchazo,' then the act of killing is in no way legitimated by the superior knowledge of the aficionado. In the same way, the traditional Roman Catholic doctrine of hell isn't legitimated by the superior knowledge of the Roman Catholic theologian and the misconceptions of the atheist, who may be unaware of the distinction, for example, between mortal and venial sins. The technical terms of bullfighting aren't to be equated with the technical terms of ballet. They're the technical terms for one or another instances of gross cruelty or its accompaniments. The aficionado knows that a mounted bullfighter is called a 'rejoneador' and that the rejoneador uses 'rejones de castigo' ('lances of punishment') before using the banderillas and eventually the 'rejón de muerte' ('lance of death), the 'descabello' being used on the spine after that in many cases. Opponents of bullfighting who know only that the bull is stabbed repeatedly before being killed have enough knowledge to come to an informed view of the morality of the acts - something which the superior knowledge of the aficionado doesn't guarantee in the least.

Bullfighting has linkages with ballet, but ballet is an incomparably more developed art than bullfighting. Aficionados like John Gordon can point to a repertoire of movements in bullfighting, ones which they see performed very well or not nearly so well, but the actions of ballet are incomparably more intricate, skilful and varied. The predominant motion of the bullfight, on which other movements are superimposed, is monotonously elliptical to a considerable extent. The bull is forced to move around the bullfighter in approximate more or less elongated ellipses, more often ragged than smooth, again and again. The actions of ballet are anything but monotonous. (But bullfighting isn't objectionable primarily on aesthetic grounds such as these.)

Aficionados who now feel an urgent need to supplement their 'knowledge' with an understanding of ethical dilemmas and ethical debate in general, have at least and at last begun to appreciate the enormity of their task, but are surely untypical. 'Afición' is generally knowledge of one sphere and shocking ignorance of other spheres of direct relevance to the continued existence of the activity they support.

Bullfighting and comedy

Hemingway had a less than sure feeling for comedy. He found comedy where there was none at all, in the death of the horses in the bull-ring, and was oblivious to comedy in his own writing. Isn't this comic, or, rather, bizarre? It comes from the Glossary of the book, where, as well as explaining the diseased world of bullfighting, he includes an entry on, of all things:

'*Tacones*: heels: *tacones de goma* are rubber heels: these are sold by ambulatory vendors who will come up to you while you are seated in the cafe, cut the heel off your shoe with a sort of instant-acting leather-cutting pincers they carry, in order to force you to put on a rubber heel. The rubber heels they attach are of a low, worthless grade...If any rubber-heel attacker ever cuts a heel of your shoe without your having first definitively ordered a pair of rubber heels, kick him in the belly or under the jaw [!] and get the heels put on by someone else...There is one sinister-faced Catalan high-pressured heel ripper...I gave him that [whether a kick in the belly or under the jaw isn't specified] but he is more of a dodger by now and you might have difficulty landing on him. The best thing when you see this particular heel-selling bastard (*hijo de puta* will do) approaching is to take off your shoes and put them inside your shirt. If he then attempts to attach rubber heels to your bare feet [!], send for the American or British Consul.'

For Hemingway, 'in the tragedy of the bullfight the horse is the comic character ... Therefore the worse the horses are, provided they are high enough off the ground and solid enough so that the picador can perform his mission with the spiked pole, or vara, the more they are a comic element.' And in connection with the disembowelling of the horses, 'There is certainly nothing comic by our standards in seeing an animal emptied of its visceral content, but if this animal instead of doing something tragic, that is, dignified, gallops in a stiff old-maidish fashion around the ring trailing the opposite of clouds of glory, it is as comic it was the horse which provided the comic touch' then according to Hemingway it is as comic as burlesque farce: 'If one is comic the other is; the humour comes from the same principle ... I have seen these, call them disembowelings, that is the worst word, when, due to their timing, they were very funny.'

See also Seamus Heaney on the actions of the banderillero, (stabbing the bull six times) which he thinks are 'closer to comedy than tragedy.'

The humour of some bullfighting enthusiasts, their idea of 'fun', make a deeply depressing study. The animal victims of the 'informal events' of Spanish fiestas are presumably regarded as hilarious, light relief from the solemn 'tragedy' of the corrida itself. A page on the impressive Web site of FAACE gives examples. The live goats thrown from the church tower in Manganeses de la Polvorosa, the pigeons and squirrels stoned in Robledo de Chavela, the live chickens hung from a line and hacked to pieces in Tordesillas, the chickens buried up to their necks and beheaded by the blindfolded villagers of Aduna, the bulls attacked with hundreds of darts in Coria. [This has now been ended.] See also the sombre, harrowing, informative, intelligent

page on the same Web site, <http://www.faace.co.uk/faqs2.htm>. The same page includes comments on the 'hazy and outrageous mythology' of the bullfight industry and the economic momentum which perpetuates the bullfight.

Donkeys are sometimes used in a 'hilarious' event which mimics the mainstream Corrida. (And sometimes there's another 'hilarious' character - a dwarf dressed as a bullfighter.) The horse is regarded as a comic character in the bullfight (so its sufferings are of no account) and a donkey is even more comic.

Bullfighting and 'duende'

He went and saw it often, Lorca:
the bulls' as they stumbled and died
suddenly glazed eyes,
as if no longer able to comprehend
the Spanish arguments for death and torture.
From frantic sun to shade,
overshadowing the dazed end
of the poet and his monstrous lies -
fated to be scythed
and beginning to fade.

My poem 'Lorca'.

Lorca gives us his thoughts on 'duende' and death in his essay 'Theory and Function of the Duende:' the full text of the essay in English translation.

He writes of duende that 'its most impressive effects appear in the bullring.' Duende, he claims, isn't needed for all phases of the bullfight, but 'in the work with the cape, while the bull is still free of wounds, and at the moment of the kill, the aid of the duende is required to drive home the nail of artistic truth.' And, 'Spain is unique, a country where death is a national spectacle, where death sounds great bugle blasts on the arrival of Spring.' He refers, of course, to the start of the bullfighting season at Easter, but his reference to Spanish uniqueness is obviously wrong, ignoring the bullfighting traditions in Southern France and Latin America.

Duende encompasses the death of people as well as bulls. I give statements from one short paragraph of Lorca's essay, on separate lines, so that their profundity, or stupidity, stands out more clearly, depending on the views of the reader:

'In every country death has finality.

Not in Spain.

A dead person in Spain is more alive than is the case anywhere else.'

The dead of the Somme, Passchendaele, Verdun and Auschwitz and the other extermination camps, being almost all non-Spanish and dying far from Spain, are denied, then, the consolation of being 'more alive' enjoyed by, for example, the Spaniards who died in the Spanish civil war, the Spanish women who died in childbirth before the development of modern medicine, the victims of the Spanish Inquisition, as well as their torturers and executioners.

So many of Lorca's claims are superficially deep, reminding us of the 'dark gods' of D H Lawrence at his worst: 'the duende has to be roused from the furthest habitations of the blood,' and 'quoting the Spanish composer Falla: 'all that has dark sounds has duende.'

Lorca sharply distinguishes duende from the Muse, 'which stirs the intellect' and the Angel. The Muse, according to Lorca, 'lifts the poet into the bondage of aristocratic fineness, where he forgets that he might be eaten, suddenly, by ants, or that a huge arsenical lobster might fall on his head - things against which the Muses who inhabit monocles, or the roses of lukewarm lacquer in a tiny salon, have no power.' In a similar style, he refers to 'that other melancholy demon of Descartes, diminutive as a green almond, that, tired of lines and circles, fled along the canals to listen to the singing of drunken sailors.' This from someone who has a towering reputation in European culture.

He goes so far as to give a definition of duende, one of the most useless and empty definitions imaginable: 'a mysterious force that everyone feels and no philosopher has explained.' As is shown by the fact that the definition was originally drawn up by Goethe to describe the violinist and composer Paganini.

How does an Andalusian with the Andalusian view of death regard those who do everything they can to save life? Grudgingly? I think that the Andalusian attitude, like the acceptance of Rilke, fails. With apologies to the people of Andalusia who aren't so limited as to share these obsessions and confusions.

Bullfighting and seduction

'From the Website of the French anti-bullfighting organization 'Alliance anti-corrída,' 'Bullfights use the very perverse effects of seduction: colours, costumes full of light, brass bands, sunshine. Everything is set up in order to mask the bloody reality. To this list could be added the haughty or grimly determined look of the bullfighter in his (or sometimes her) colourful costume. Although these are completely familiar, I include an image. It evidently shows a bullfighter superimposed on a separate image of a bullring background but the image of the bullfighter is important here, not the background.'





The morality of the bullfight can never be confirmed by any of its outward trappings. The costumes of the matadors, the procession before the bullfight, the language ('the moment of truth'), the music, to some people (but the brass bands may well be found completely unsexy) convert some people to the substitute religion or supplementary religion of the bullfight, they make the bullfight acceptable to many, many people, or far more than 'acceptable,' but that is all they are - trappings, appearances.

If horses and bulls were treated in the bullring in exactly the same way as now but the bullfighters were people in nondescript clothes who made no attempt to pose, if 'the moment of truth' were to be described as 'the attempt at killing,' then the immorality of bullfighting would be even more widely recognized.

Bullfighters and bullfighting supporters aren't 'Nazis' - this is a word that has to be used very carefully - but there are linkages in the use of seduction and propaganda and in their mythologizing. Nazi Germany understood very well how to seduce the senses and mask the reality of its brutal and degraded regime: torchlit processions, the vast displays of might at Nuremberg. Leni Riefenstahl's film 'Triumph of the Will' shows the Nuremberg uses Wagner's 'Götterdämmerung', the beating of drums, the singing of the Horst Wessel-Lied, the shadow of Hitler's plane, the consecration of Nazi Party flags, a giant swastika, silhouetted men, vast numbers of men. Ethical depth so often requires looking beyond the seductive appearance and if most Germans at the time never did so, some Germans were never fooled, and often paid with their lives.

The Roman Catholic Church has brought many into its fold and kept many within it despite any doubts by its very often masterful use of visual spectacle, the visual appeal of priestly vestments, by the musical and architectural riches which are part of its heritage, by the evocative language of the Mass. But again, it's necessary to look beyond any seductive appearances. Roman Catholic theology - including the ban on artificial methods of contraception and abortion in all circumstances, the concept of mortal sin, until not so very long ago the belief that unbaptized babies could never enter heaven, the belief in hell, and the rest - cannot possibly be confirmed by any of these outward trappings.

San Francisco Opera, Susan McClary and Carmen

Below, there's information about the production of Carmen due to be given by San Francisco Opera later this year. Susan McClary, a musicologist at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio, is the author of the book 'Carmen.' There's a critical section on the book, with much more information on the background to the opera, in my page on Cambridge University (the book is published by Cambridge University Press, a department of the university.) Susan McClary completely neglected the topic of the ethical objections to bullfighting in her book on the opera - even though this is the only opera to have a bullfighting setting. San Francisco opera, in its obnoxious, misleading publicity material, which I quote, neglects the topic too.

From the libretto of 'Carmen':

ESCAMILLO (*to Carmen*)
If you love me, Carmen soon
you can be proud of me.

CARMEN
Ah! I love you, Escamillo, I love you,
and may I die if I have ever loved
anyone as much as you!

TOGETHER
Ah! I love you!
Yes, I love you!

The bullfighter Escamillo is soon to fight in the bullring. It's his prowess in the bullring which will supposedly make Carmen proud of him.

The publicity materials on the San Francisco Opera Website

<https://sfopera.com/1819season/carmen/>

include this bit of routine writing

'Meet the hottest woman in all of Seville—a free spirit who knows what she wants and isn't afraid to go get it. But what happens when the attention she attracts turns obsessive? Find out in this pulse-pounding, picturesque production.'

And this propaganda-publicity

The Art of the Bullfight

'If you want a more complete picture of Spanish culture, study bullfighting. Famous writers of various nationalities have eloquently expressed that sentiment from Federico García Lorca to Ernest Hemingway, most notably in the American author's *Death in the Afternoon*. "It is impossible to believe the emotional and spiritual intensity and the pure, classic beauty that can be

and spiritual intensity and the pure, classic beauty that can be produced by a man, an animal and a piece of scarlet serge," Hemingway wrote in 1932.

Although he never visited the country, Georges Bizet (along with *Carmen* co-librettists Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy) knew that no story set in Spain would be complete without channeling the passion and myths intrinsic to the bullfight—or *toro* as it is known in Spanish-speaking countries. That fascination continues today with films such as *Blood and Sand*, based on Vicente Blasco Ibáñez's best-selling novel, and Pedro Almodóvar's *Matador*.

"Yet for outsiders there are still a number of misconceptions surrounding this vital aspect of Spanish culture. First, as Edward F. Stanton writes in his comprehensive *Handbook of Spanish Popular Culture*, bullfighting is neither sport nor entertainment. It is ceremony, a way of life deeply rooted in Spanish society—in effect, a solemn and sacred dance of life and death. What's more, bullfighting is theater, as cathartic as ancient Greek tragedy. Not a competition between man and bull, but, as Stanton writes, "a mutual participation in a prescribed ritual, or as some have suggested, a kind of sublimated lovemaking." But isn't bullfighting inherently cruel and savage, in which the bull or (less likely) the man must die? Spaniards also fervently debate the question. "Take away the bull and we'll see what is left," wrote Spanish author Antonio Gala. "Would we recognize ourselves without the passion for and against the bull?" For the bull is the country's most identifiable symbol. As early as the first century A.D., the Iberian Peninsula was described by the Greek geographer Strabo as a dried, stretched bull's hide. Cattle still populate the Spanish countryside—in actuality and as 20-foot-tall, black billboards in the shape of a fighting bull (*toro bravo*). Originally advertisements for Soberano ("Sovereign") brandy, these billboards have become national artistic monuments.

Fans will trace the origins of Spanish bullfighting as far back as ancient cave paintings and Roman hunts, although the historical record isn't so certain. What we do know is that for centuries, the Catholic Church in Spain registered its displeasure with bullfighting's pagan associations, including one edict dating from 447 A.D. Two popes even attempted to outlaw the spectacles in the sixteenth century. During the age of the Enlightenment, Spanish monarchs also tried to prohibit the bulls, yet with little success. Government policy changed entirely during the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939–1975), when bullfighting was promoted owing to its strong connection to Spanish tradition. Today, in spite of protests by animal rights advocates and increasing government regulations, bullfighting remains popular.

According to one count, there are approximately 8,000 bull-related events celebrated each year in Spain. These include not just the formal bullfight or *corrida de toros*, but the *encierro* or running of the bulls immortalized by Hemingway in *The Sun Also Rises*; *capeas*, the informal caping of calves, cows, or bulls during fiestas in thousands of town squares; and *recortadores* or competitions of bull-dodgers practiced by amateurs. In contrast, bullfighting is a centuries-old profession. Nowadays most bullfighters or *toreros* are trained in formal bullfighting schools, including one in San Diego. In 1976, it became legal for women to be professional bullfighters in Spain.

"In Bizet's *Carmen*, there are notable inaccuracies about bullfighting, including the very term *torador* which does not exist in Spanish. (It was purportedly invented by Bizet so that the syllables of the word would correspond with the music for the Toreador Song.) However, as Stanton notes in his history of bullfighting, "the most marginal ethnic group in all of Spain, the Gypsies, have made up a disproportionate percentage of matadores," particularly in more recent times. The hot-blooded *Carmen* has met her match not with the cool and aloof Don José but with the brave Escamillo.

In the end, passion, dignity, and tradition have become synonymous with Spanish bullfighting. Without bullfighters, as the aficionado Fernando Claramunt remarked, "Spain would be like any other place in the world. They are modern man's last connection to the ancient, heroic past."

The misconceptions and falsifications to be found in this passage, and the many more lies and misconceptions used in defence of bullfighting, are addressed on this page. I point out that the bullfighters who are, supposedly, 'modern man's last connection to the ancient, heroic past' have now, and had in the past, only a very remote chance of being killed in the bullring, unlike the vast numbers of people in modern times who face incomparably greater risks.

Cast and Creative

This is the list provided by the San Francisco Opera Website page:

CAST

Carmen	J'Nai Bridges
Don José	Matthew Polenzani
Micaëla	Anita Hartig *
Escamillo	Kyle Ketelsen
Zuniga	David Leigh *
El Dancaïro	Christopher Oglesby*
El Remendado	Zhengyi Bai*
Moralès	SeokJong Baek*
Frasquita	Natalie Image*
Mercédès	Ashley Dixon

CREATIVE

Conductor	James Gattigan
Conductor	Michelle Merrill *1
Production	Francesca Zambello
Associate Stage Director & Movement Director	Denni Sayers
Production Designer	Tanya McCallin
Original Lighting Designer	Paule Constable
Revival Lighting Designer	Justin A. Partier
Fight Director	Dave Maier
Chorus Director	Ian Robertson

PERFORMANCES

June 5, 11, 14, 20, 23, 26, 29, 2019

Back to my own response:

San Francisco Opera's production of Carmen: action against

If I lived in San Francisco, I wouldn't attend any of the performances. I'd print leaflets to explain my revulsion and I'd offer a leaflet to people who decided that they would attend - as I've done in the case of a variety of causes, not just opposition to bullfighting. I hope that some San Franciscans will do something similar just before the performances start and during the time when the opera is being performed.

I oppose disruption and damage as campaigning techniques in the case of all the causes which I've actively supported. I wouldn't oppose disruption and damage in the case of Nazism, of course.

I oppose the view that because 'Carmen' is an opera which is ethically objectionable, in part - the part which is concerned with bullfighting - that the composer Bizet had no melodic gift or that Bizet had no musical strengths. That would be ridiculous. If people want to go to see a performance of 'Carmen' given by this opera company, or any other, then they're entitled to. I hope that audiences of the opera will have enough knowledge of the realities of bullfighting to see through the spurious glamour. Overall, I recommended this course of action to supporters of San Francisco Opera:

San Francisco Opera's production of Carmen

Stay away. Continue to support San Francisco Opera, but give this production a miss. Let the public at the performances of 'Carmen' be made up entirely of believers, people who in their ignorance really do believe that bullfighters are 'modern man's last connection to the ancient, heroic past.'

Aficionados out there are welcome to point out the mistakes and omissions they find in my account of bullfighting on this page, if they want to, and if they can.

I don't take the view that because Susan McClary's book 'Carmen' is very deficient in some ways, such as the ignoring of the questions raised by bullfighting, that the book is completely hopeless. She has many, many strengths as a musicologist, although many, many weaknesses when she strays beyond musicology, which is often.

I give a list of people involved in the production, but with no blame attached, with the exception of people who did make the decisions which compromise this production so severely, including Matthew Erikson, who compiled the pro-bullfight propaganda on the San Francisco Opera Website which is quoted above.

I regard live opera as very important. I live in a city without an opera company, or a professional orchestra. Music can't flourish where recorded music is the only music on offer. The demands on professional and semi-professional musicians (and the staff of opera companies) are severe. Singers, instrumentalists and conductors face immense difficulties in launching their careers and in the rest of their careers. Except for a minority, they are paid not nearly enough.

Cultural stagnation

The attention given to the bullfight in Provence, Seville and other places is a sign not of colourful tradition but of stagnation. Any region or country with vitality tries to preserve its strengths and reduce its weaknesses. To be unchanging, to be oblivious to the better intellectual and cultural currents of the age, is a sign of weakness.

Great Britain, but particularly England, has a very high regard for tradition but it has at least recognized that tradition can be a sign of weakness as well as strength. It's remarkable that Britain, with all its faults, transformed itself from a bull-baiting and bear-baiting and fox-hunting country, one with no real tradition of animal welfare, to one with such a care for dogs, cats, and injured wildlife, and one which has achieved a very great deal in the abolition of factory farming, although not nearly enough. Countries, as well as people, are not condemned to repeat the past, to perpetuate traditions that have become unacceptable for very good reasons. Practices that seem deeply embedded in a society, too much a part of its tradition to be reformed or abolished, can be ended.

Hanging by the neck is an ancient English tradition that has gone. It might have been expected that Spain's fondness for the death penalty would have been reversed with more difficulty. Not so. Execution by garrote and shooting was ended in Spain in a dramatic way. To their credit, not one member of the Spanish

parliament voted against abolition. Before bad practices are ended by legislation, though, they may wither away, regarded as obsolete, as an embarrassment. This will be an essential preliminary to the abolition of bullfighting in the bullfighting countries.

Andalucia, along with Castilla, is the European region most closely associated with the bullfight. It's argued - more often, simply stated - that Andalucia is so receptive to bullfighting because of the attitude to death there. Northern Europeans, and others, are supposed to confess their limitations at this point, to confess, helplessly, that they can't possibly understand death like the Andalucians, being so much more superficial. That's why so many Northern Europeans, and others, are outraged by the bullfight. They lack this sense of life mysteriously interlinked with death. And how does an Andalucian interpret and make sense of, from the depth of Andalucian insight, those vast repositories of death outside Andalucia, such as the Somme, Passchendaele, Verdun, Stalingrad, and Auschwitz and the other extermination camps?

Martin Seymour-Smith is a writer I appreciate very much. I quote him in a number of places in this site. Yet he supported the bullfight (whilst opposing fox-hunting). His biography of Robert Graves has a photograph which shows the two of them attending a bullfight, Robert Graves looking very worried, Martin Seymour-Smith with a look of evident appreciation. He was a man of contradictions, although of course hardly alone in this. Goya was an ardent supporter of the bullfight and drew pictures of bullfighting scenes, but he is one of the painters who mean a great deal to me. As is clear from his unforgettable series of pictures 'The Disasters of War,' and from such masterpieces as 'The Third of May, 1808: The Execution of the Defenders of Madrid' and 'Saturn eating his son.' Goya had deep insights into the violence of the world. His failures in regard to bullfighting are, I think, failures in what I refer to as **{adjustment}**.

I've digressed to make it clear that I see the need to recognize that bullfight supporters are not necessarily to be condemned totally, given no credit for any strengths. Their strengths may be very substantial.

Arrival in Provence for the first time from Northern Europe. Impressions, the experience of countless travellers: the heat of the day, the wonderful warmth of the evenings, the powerful leafy scents, the quality of the light, the blue skies, the cypresses, the unexpected wildness of the landscape, French spoken unexpectedly, with a different accent. Is not the ordered bullfight just another sign of local distinctiveness? To abolish it to make a **reduction of contrast?**

In other places in this site, I've made clear that reduction of contrast can't be regarded **mechanically**, as always good. It has to be **evaluated**. There are many, many colourful customs, distinctive of a region, which have involved unnecessary harm to men, women or children, as well as animals. Their loss has been a gain.

If we carry out a **((survey))** of a region, or a whole country, we find that there is so much to interest us. Provence has so much to interest any traveller that the loss of the bullfight would be insignificant. A survey of the pleasures available would include so much - a very partial list would include the pleasures of eating, of wine, of emotional intensity, sexual intensity, of the landscape, of nature, of the genuine arts, the true arts not fatally compromised by any dependence on the infliction of suffering and death. The bullfight apologist might even discover that the world of animals becomes an absorbing interest.

The English writer V S Pritchett describes the pleasures of life in Spain in 'The Spanish Temper' and 'Foreign Faces.' In 'Foreign Faces,' he gives a memorable portrait of Seville, the city of Figaro and Don Giovanni. The overwhelming impressions as he enters the city: 'Inside the city white walls are buried in bougainvillea and wistaria and all climbing flowers, geraniums hanging from thousands of white balconies, great lilies in windows, carnations at street corners, and roses climbing up the walls and even the trees so that all the gasps and hyperbole of pleasure are on our lips.' He goes on to describe momentous, thrilling, dramatic aspects of life in Seville. As for the bullfights held there, '...this spectacle has its terrible periods of boredom... There are plenty of people in the crowd coming away from the bull ring complaining of the enormous prices charged, the commercialisation of the show and the decline in its quality.' The 'decline in its quality.' V S Pritchett judged the whole thing purely in terms of human pleasure. He was uncritical, a gifted but limited writer.

Animals: appreciation and abuse

Umberto Saba on the pathos of one animal, the original followed by my translation

La capra

Ho parlato a una capra.
Era sola sul prato, era legata.
Sazia d'erba, bagnata
dalla pioggia, belata.
Quell'uguale belato era fraterno
al mio dolore. Ed io risposi, prima
per cella, poi perché il dolore è eterno,
ha una voce e non varia.
Questa voce sentiva
gemere in una capra solitaria.
In una capra dal viso semita
sentiva querelarsi ogni altro male,
ogni altra vita.

The goat

I talked to a goat.
 He was alone in the field, tethered,
 fed up with grass, soaked
 with rain, bleating.
 That same bleating was brother
 to my sorrow. I answered, first
 as a joke, but then because sorrow's for ever,
 has a voice and never varies.
 This voice I sensed
 moaning in a solitary goat.
 In a goat with a semitic face
 I sensed all ills lamenting,
 all lives.

There's a linkage between bullfighting, surely, and a pitifully limited appreciation of animals and care for animals, a linkage between bullfighting and other abuses of animals, even if there may be significant exceptions. Bullfighting apologists do, genuinely, appreciate the power of the bull, the magnificence of the bull (both the power and the magnificence are destroyed by the punishing power of the picador's lance and the banderillas, so that it's a shadow of the magnificent animal, an animal weakened by injury, loss of blood and pain which faces the final act.) Bullfighting apologists are far less likely than other people, surely, to appreciate, to sympathize with, to commune with, to feel pity for, to want to help, all the animals which lack the power and strength of bulls but which have grace, charm, usefulness, or which have no particular appeal to any human preferences but which simply have mysterious 'otherness.' To feel the compassion of Umberto Saba, or of Thomas Hardy. This is from Thomas Hardy's poem, 'Afterwards.'

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,
 When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,
 One may say, 'He strove that such innocent creatures
 should ...come to no harm.'

Feelings like these, present in bullfighting countries but surely in stark contrast with the predominant ethos of a bullfighting country, are infinitely more valuable than the grandiose posturing which is bullfighting's depraved contribution to the world.

As with life-enhancing feelings, so with opposition to organized mass cruelty, it could confidently be predicted that the bullfighting countries would not be in the forefront of opposition to the cruelties of factory farming. When the European Union voted to phase out the battery cage (although the so-called 'enriched cage,' a slightly larger battery cage, is a very poor compromise), the only country which voted against was - Spain.

Bullfighting and mono-culture

The 'culture' in 'monoculture' refers to the growing of crops, of course: monoculture is cultivation of one crop to the exclusion of all others, or the overwhelming dominance of a single crop. Monoculture has severe disadvantages. It may entail the loss of genetic diversity, aesthetic loss, loss of interest, the monotony of uniformity, and practical loss, such as the loss of plants which feed beneficial insects and other creatures.

The term 'monoculture' is sometimes used without reference to agriculture. In this case, the reference is almost always to dominance, not to the complete exclusion of alternatives. I use the hyphenated term 'mono-culture' where the 'culture' refers not to cultivation of crops but to aspects of artistry, major or minor, and, to an extent, the wider world of 'ideas, beliefs, values, and knowledge' (Collins English Dictionary).

It seems to me that in the areas of Spain where bullfighting is actively pursued, there's a mono-culture of bullfighting which is unhealthy. Bullfighting doesn't exclude all other forms of 'culture,' obviously, in these areas, but it does have dominance. In Andalucia, for example, cante jondo flourishes, to an extent, but is less prominent than bullfighting and has linkages with it.

The mono-culture of bullfighting is uninteresting as well as unhealthy. Nature writing in English is one of the glories of English literature - the nature writing of American writers such as Thoreau as well as such English writers as Gilbert White, in 'The Natural History of Selborne,' Richard Mabey and of course so many others, and in other countries as well as these, including a host of superb lesser-known writers. I'd include in this number Jennifer Owen, who wrote 'Garden Life.' She writes of swifts, 'In July, swifts wheel and scream in the sky above the garden. Their elegant, black silhouettes, tracing ever-changing patterns against the clear blue of early morning or the opalescent glow of evening, lift the spirits of the most earthbound gardener.'

Many of these writers have revealed the glory of humble creatures, such as moths. They are prominent in 'Garden Life.' Thoreau writes in the closing section of 'Walden' that 'Every one has heard the story which has gone the rounds of New England, of a strong and beautiful bug which came out of the dry leaf of an old table of apple-wood, which had stood in a farmer's kitchen for sixty years ...'

Spain's natural history is richer than England's, but the English have made incomparably more of their heritage of natural history than the Spanish, I'd claim. The mono-culture of bulls has surely impoverished Spanish nature writing. Apart from its cruelty, the mono-culture of bullfighting in large areas has impoverished Spanish culture.

If it's conceded that nature writing and appreciation of nature are strengths of English culture but argued that English culture, unlike Spanish culture, largely ignores death, and that this is an obvious weakness of English culture, then I'd argue in turn that this is a gross distortion. I discuss it in the sections Bullfighting

and 'cuende' and Cultural stagnation. The Spanish preoccupation with death can easily be paralleled in earlier English culture. English parish churches - important to many an intransigent atheist, including myself - are full of reminders of 'memento mori.' English culture has far more of classical balance now: remembrance and grieving rather than preoccupation with death, the public and private remembrance of our war dead, including those who died fighting against fascism, and the countless acts of private remembrance and grieving obviously observed in every country, not only in Spain.

The biography section of a very comprehensive library or a very comprehensive bookshop contains biographies and autobiographies of scientists, engineers, mathematicians, explorers, travellers, poets, novelists, essayists, politicians, generals, soldiers, sailors, airmen, painters, architects, financiers, administrators, nationalists, anarchists, communists, conservatives, comedians, gardeners, ordinary people with ordinary or extraordinary lives - but obviously, the number of categories is immense. It may even include, in the case of very comprehensive libraries, the biographies of a few bullfighters. Are the claims to importance made by bullfighting supporters to be believed in the slightest? Is the adulation in the least healthy? Would the biography section of a very comprehensive library or a very comprehensive bookshop be anything other than pitiful if it contained not much more than biographies of bullfighters or books such as Alexander Fiske-Harrison's 'Into the Arena,' which belongs to the genre of autobiography? Does bullfighting really encompass everything important in the world, or so much that's important?

Miriam Mandel is the editor of 'Hemingway's Dangerous Summer: the complete annotations,' a scholarly pro-bullfighting work - but its accumulated detail undermines the bullfighting case (there's revealing information about the extent of 'afeitado,' tampering with the bull by 'horn shaving.' Miriam Mandel shows the usual aficionado's awe-struck and credulous opinion of bullfighters, extending even to bullfighters' biochemistry and physiology, or at least the biochemical and physiological processes concerned in wound healing. These, it seems, are different from those of lesser people: 'Injuries require a bullfighter to absent himself from the ring, but these enforced absences are often surprisingly short (bullfighters seem to heal more quickly than other people).

Fadjen, a fighting bull, and Christophe Thomas

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntWd5Pq4Xyo>

This is a remarkable film from Pablo Knudsen showing the warm relationship between a bull bred for fighting and Christophe Thomas, the French man who saved him from ever fighting in a bullring. It shows too the gentle relationship between the bull and the goats who play with him and the bull's complete acceptance of a horse. 'Fighting bulls' are subjected to treatment which is artificial and abnormal, treatment calculated to make them aggressive. In the bullring, the bull has nowhere to escape or to hide. The film exposes this treatment and the trickery often used by bullfighters, which fools so many people. The idyll, the possibility of a wonderfully harmonious relationship between human and animal, is far from being a myth. It's no more impossible in the case of human and 'fighting bull' than in the case of human and dog. The film comes from Christophe Thomas's Website, which has other films about Fadjen. The site deserves a prominent role in the anti-bullfighting movement, www.sauvons-un-taureau-de-corrída.com

I don't in the least claim that all bulls are non-aggressive, only that in this respect, as in others, they show variability.

Campaigning techniques

I provide an illustration of the distinction I make here in the next section, Three Spanish restaurants.

In campaigning, I think it's essential to distinguish two things:

(1) The most effective techniques to win, in this case, to abolish the corrida. This will often demand short, vivid messages and simple slogans - as when the French Alliance Anticorrída organized an amazing air campaign over Nîmes in May, 2007, two planes flying and towing banners with a short message against the bullfight over a distance of 600km. It will often demand arguments presented very briefly, and action which is concentrated rather than diffuse, action which is not at all genteel, but action which keeps within the law. In a democracy, it may be necessary to break the law in exceptional circumstances if that seems the only way to end a serious abuse, but the most effective actions for opposing bullfighting don't require the law to be broken (I mention an exception below.) In fact, violence against people and damage to property damage the anti-bullfighting cause. I oppose these tactics in all cases. (Where the opponent is a totalitarian power, as in the occupied countries of Europe during the Second World War, then the use of violence and force and damage to property can easily be justified.)

In fact, in most cases, anti-bullfighting activists use tactics which can be supported wholeheartedly, for example, the tactics used by these Spanish activists shown in this film. It shows them travelling to the scene of their protest outside the bullring, followed by horrific scenes during a bullfight.

I support disruption of bullfights, whether or not they entail a public order offence which is a breach of the law. The rule of law is very important but a perfectionistic approach to observance of the law isn't possible or even desirable in every single case. People handing out leaflets opposing bullfighting (or some other activity) may be 'guilty' of obstruction if they stand still whilst doing so, but any feelings of guilt on that score are unnecessary.

in this film, a bullfight in Barcelona is disrupted:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OibprDli4BM>

No bullfights take place here now, of course, as in the rest of Spanish Catalonia. (The same moral advance hasn't been made in French Catalonia so far.)

(2) The reasoning which underlies the action. This should not be simple. It should be comprehensive (covering all relevant aspects of the subject rather than a few), fair-minded (taking every care to avoid distortions of reality, taking note of possible objections), sophisticated in moral argument and, also, factually correct. It's not true, for example, that the bull is killed by a sword thrust to the heart, as is often claimed, for example, in the current 'Rough Guide to France.' Very often, the bull isn't killed by a sword thrust to the aorta either, but, after hitting bone, by brutally prolonged attempts to sever the spinal cord.

I would stress the power of ideas. The ideas which seem vastly more forceful, developed, persuasive than the opposing ideas are amongst the most important contributions to activism. They're a precondition for activism, or should be. One of the most striking demonstrations comes from the history of penal reform, on which the Italian thinker Beccaria has had an incalculable influence. To read more about his achievement, click here. Beccaria's achievement is amongst other things a massive practical achievement - concrete reforms can be traced back to his work - but these were due purely to his ideas. He had none of the attributes of an activist. The introduction to his work 'On Crimes and Punishments' in the Hackett edition describes the work as 'greater than its self-effacing author, a man of almost crippling shyness.'

The philosophical literature to do with animals and animal suffering is now vast. The fact that most aficionados in the bullfighting regions of Europe, from Andalusia to Arles, are not aware that it exists is a serious deficiency. This literature, which reflects a fundamental change of consciousness, is comparable in importance with the literature and the changes which began the secularization of Europe during the Enlightenment. A non-technical statement by Jeremy Bentham, often quoted, is a good starting point. His 'utilitarian' view is now better termed a 'consequentialist' view. It appears in *The Principles of Morals and Legislation*, 1789, Chapter XVII, Section 1d:

'The day may come, when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny. The French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason why a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor. It may come one day to be recognized, that the number of the legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the os sacrum, are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or, perhaps, the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day, or a week, or even a month, old. But suppose the case were otherwise, what would it avail? the question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?'

Three Spanish restaurants

This section illustrates the discussion of the previous section on Campaigning techniques. It gives suggestions for practical action and gives further reasons in support of action.

Abel Lusa is the owner of three Spanish restaurants in London. In an interview on ultravie.co.uk he mentions 'a strong torero influence' in answer to the question, 'Where do you take your inspiration from when creating your menus and the ambience in your restaurants?'

These restaurants are within a short distance of each other on Old Brompton Road: 'Tendido Cero,' (174 Old Brompton Road), 'Capote y Toros' (157 Old Brompton Road) and 'Cambio de Tercio' (163 Old Brompton Road.) In an interview 'Tendido Cero.' 'Tendido' refers to 'rows of open seats in a bull ring' (Hemingway, 'Death in the Afternoon.') 'Cero' is zero. The rows of seats are numbered. This restaurant has 'huge, rather camp photographs of matadors.' ('Time Out.') 'Capote y Toros.' 'Capote' is the cape of the bullfighter and 'toros,' of course, means bulls. In this restaurant there are '... framed pictures of bullfighters.' ('Time Out.') These can be seen by scrolling down a little way, past the images of some foods on offer, on this page on this page.

'Cambio de Tercio.' 'Cambio' means 'change' and the 'tercio' refers to one of the three parts of a bullfight, the 'tercio de varas,' in which the bull is lanced by the picador, the 'tercio de banderillas,' in which the bull is stabbed with the six banderillas, and the 'tercio del muerte,' where 'muerte' means death. This restaurant too makes use of a bullfighting theme, the bullfighter paintings of Luis Canizares, whose work is also prominent on their Website, cambiodetercio.co.uk

Less indirect ways of opposing bullfighting would be preferable but anti-bullfighting activists in this country aren't able to make use of them, since there are no bullrings here, this country being so much in advance of Spain in matters of animal welfare. This being so, I believe there's a case to be made for action against these restaurants, but principally by handing out leaflets to customers. This would be my interpretation of 'direct action,' a form of action which is almost instinctive with me, but a form of action which has to be used with great restraint if it isn't to be counter-productive. (There's no reason, however, why leafletting should be conducted in too genteel a way.) In the past, my interpretation of direct action was far less restrained, but never to

the point of advocating or of course taking part in violence and damage to property
I can think of ways in which opposition to bullfighting which used these restaurants as a focus could be very useful. I think it's a mistake for activists to overlook actions which it could be argued are marginal. Small scale actions can make a contribution in this sphere as in others.

This page is about bullfighting, not about other animal welfare issues, but I resolutely oppose the cruelty involved in producing foie gras. Its production is illegal in this country. In my page on Israel I mention the fact that Israel used to be the fourth largest producer of foie gras in the world but, to its very great credit, banned its production in view of the cruelty involved. Importation of foie gras into this country and selling it here aren't illegal. Many restaurateurs never use it, as a product of gross cruelty. It will come as no surprise that Abel Lusa isn't one of them and that his restaurants offer foie gras.

Shops and large stores have sometimes come under intense pressure for this one issue, selling foie gras. Kirk Leech, writing in defence of Foie Gras (huffingtonpost.co.uk) 'On Friday 9 December a small group of animal rights activists 'targeted' a list of Yorkshire based restaurants that serve foie gras. Van Zeller, a restaurant in Harrogate was subjected to a short but noisy demonstration. The protestors then made their way to the small village of Ramsgill where they protested outside the Yorke Arms Hotel. From there they moved onto Bolton Abbey, near Skipton where the Devonshire Arms Hotel was 'targeted'. Their activities included leafletting customers as they arrived to eat and making speeches condemning foie gras outside the establishments. Occasionally they book tables and then when seated stand up and denounce foie gras in front of other customers.'

This will seem very unsophisticated behaviour to gourmet-aesthetes of a certain kind, or the usual kind. But the ethics of these gourmet-aesthetes, and the bullfighting-aesthetes, will seem very unsophisticated - primitive - to many people who have given thought to the matter. Matthew Norman gives an appreciation of the cooking at 'Cambio de Tercio' which is very, very effusive (in 'The Daily Telegraph.'). A sample: "Ooh, ooh, oooooohh," moaned my friend. "Woo, woo, wooooo," I whimpered back.' This appreciation of 'a thing of genius' (... gazpacho decanted into a bowl hosting a juicy disc of lobster and a scoop of cherry sorbet) was succeeded by appreciation of another thing: 'This was a creamy, eggy, potatoey mush with caramelised onions at the bottom of a cocktail glass, followed by a sheet of foie gras terrine atop smoked eel and apple slices.' Could such a sophisticate be an ethical ignoramus, in matters appertaining to foie gras at least? Quite easily.

Kirk Leech continues,

'Most restaurants and shops don't need the hassle of these protests and cave in to this degree of pressure. Only this week Brook's, in Brighouse Yorkshire, and Six Baltic, based in the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art on the river Tyne, became the latest restaurants to drop foie gras.'

'Were it that all campaigns could be won with such little effort. In the past, animal rights activists have been known to participate in illegal and occasionally violent attacks against their opposition. Now it's phone calls, emails and small protests.

'Low input activism this maybe, but it's clearly effective.' I couldn't put it better myself. I resolutely oppose illegal and violent action and make phone calls, send emails and take part in small protests (I've travelled great distances to take part in these.) I advocate 'low input activism' as more effective than the alternatives. Kirk Leech does underestimate the difficulty and arduousness of action so often, or almost always.

I think that the evidence available justifies taking action against these three Spanish restaurants, 'Tendido Cero,' 'Capote y Toros' and 'Cambio de Tercio' for selling foie gras and a second issue, bullfighting. Action against these restaurants could well be given a high priority, using the methods of 'low input activism.' It can be argued that opposition should only take the form of presenting ideas, arguments and evidence, with no attempt to target a specific individual, organization or commercial concern. My priority is very much to present contributions which belong to the realm of ideas, arguments and evidence, but I see the need to supplement these with specific action. I'm completely receptive to criticisms of this approach.

I've given an outline of action which could be undertaken, part 1 in the previous section on Campaigning techniques. Part 2 in the previous section is concerned with the reasoning which underlines the action. Here, I concentrate on foie gras rather than bullfighting. The reasons for opposing bullfighting are given in the rest of this page. I now need to address the matter of foie gras, so that any opposition to these restaurants for their connections with foie gras and bullfighting can be carried out with a comprehensive set of arguments and evidence.

The reasons Kirk Leech gives in his article for defending foie gras production are completely inadequate. In this area, as in so many others, evidence-based argument is in short supply. An evidence-based document which should be studied with care by defenders of foie-gras production, one giving a wealth of biochemical, physiological and other information, and scrupulous in its drawing of attention to areas where adequate information is lacking, is the European Union's Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare on Welfare Aspects of the Production of Foie Gras in Ducks and Geese.

However, the matter can't be decided by citation of biochemical, physiological, ethological and other scientific evidence alone, and

this particular document has to be supplemented with other studies and other approaches, such as ones which make an appeal to moral philosophy. There are films available from 'show farms' which attempt to give an idyllic picture of the life of geese and ducks. It can be shown that these are misleading. For a very different perspective, an inquirer could watch this very harrowing film, Force-Fed to Death (the narrator is Reger Moore) and after watching it could well come to the conclusion that action against the three Spanish restaurants, and other restaurants and food outlets which sell foie gras, is fully justifiable. The film comes from the large organization PETA. In general, I don't endorse in the least some of the tactics used by PETA, which are sometimes deranged, or some of the deranged thinking which lies behind the tactics. Some of PETA'S work is genuinely impressive, and the film is an example of PETA at its best, I think. Abi Izzard of PETA changed her name officially to 'StopFortnumAndMasonFoieGrasCruelty.com' (changes to documents like her driving licence were necessary) to publicize the fact that the store Fortnum and Mason still sells foie gras - not in the least a useful contribution.

This is the introduction to the Scientific Committee's document. It sets out the principles which I think should underlie all animal welfare work. Giving the reasons for practical opposition will not always entail the giving of very comprehensive evidence in dispassionate form, but the scrupulousness and comprehensiveness of an adequate ((survey)) should inform the practical action.

'There is widespread belief that people have moral obligations to the animals with which they interact, such that poor welfare should be minimised and very poor welfare avoided. It is assumed that animals, including farm animals, can experience pain, fear and distress and that welfare is poor when these occur. This has led to animal welfare being on the political agenda of European countries.

'Legislation varies, but E.U. member states have ratified the Council of Europe's Convention on the Protection of Animal kept for Farming Purposes. Article 3 of that Convention states that "Animals shall be housed and provided with food, water and care in a manner which, having regard to their species and their degree of development, adaptation and domestication, is appropriate to their physiological and ethological needs in accordance with established experience and scientific knowledge" (Council of Europe, 1976).

'In addition to political debate, the amount of information based on the scientific study of animal welfare has increased. Scientists have added to knowledge of the physiological and behavioural responses of animals and philosophers have developed ethical views on animal welfare. Nevertheless, all agree that decisions about animal welfare should be based on good scientific evidence (Duncan, 1981, Broom, 1988 b).

'Scientific evidence regarding the welfare of ducks and geese in relation to foie gras production is gathered together in this report. In chapter 1, different definitions of animal welfare are presented, the four main indicators of animal welfare are discussed and the importance of combining results from several indicators is emphasised. In the second chapter the extent of production of foie gras is described and in the third, practical aspects of production are summarised. Chapter four concerns the behaviour of geese and ducks in relation to force feeding or "gavage". The consequences for the birds of force feeding are described in chapter five. The remaining chapters concern the likely socio-economic consequences of any changes whose aim is to improve the welfare of the birds, suggestions for future research and conclusions. Finally, there is a list of references quoted in the report.

'There is widespread belief that people have moral obligations to the animals with which they interact, such that poor welfare should be minimised and very poor welfare avoided. It is assumed that animals, including farm animals, can experience pain, fear and distress and that welfare is poor when these occur. This has led to animal welfare being on the political agenda of European countries.

'Legislation varies, but E.U. member states have ratified the Council of Europe's Convention on the Protection of Animal kept for Farming Purposes. Article 3 of that Convention states that "Animals shall be housed and provided with food, water and care in a manner which, having regard to their species and their degree of development, adaptation and domestication, is appropriate to their physiological and ethological needs in accordance with established experience and scientific knowledge" (Council of Europe, 1976).

'In addition to political debate, the amount of information based on the scientific study of animal welfare has increased. Scientists have added to knowledge of the physiological and behavioural responses of animals and philosophers have developed ethical views on animal welfare. Nevertheless, all agree that decisions about animal welfare should be based on good scientific evidence (Duncan, 1981, Broom, 1988 b).

'Scientific evidence regarding the welfare of ducks and geese in relation to foie gras production is gathered together in this report. In chapter 1, different definitions of animal welfare are presented, the four main indicators of animal welfare are discussed and the importance of combining results from several indicators is emphasised. In the second chapter the extent of production of foie gras is described and in the third, practical aspects of production are summarised. Chapter four concerns the behaviour of geese and ducks in relation to force feeding or "gavage". The consequences for the birds of force feeding are described in chapter five. The remaining chapters concern the likely socio-economic consequences of any changes whose aim is to improve the welfare of the birds, suggestions for future research and conclusions. Finally, there is a list of references quoted in the report.'

Human welfare, animal welfare

Bullfighting supporters quite often criticize animal welfare and

animal rights supporters (I don't give arguments here for preferring one form of words or the other but I describe myself as involved in 'animal welfare,' not 'animal rights') for neglecting human welfare and human rights. More often than not, I would think, the bullfighting supporters haven't been very energetic themselves in furthering human welfare and human rights (they may have been too busy watching and reading about bulls being slowly put to death.) If one person has done little or nothing to reduce human suffering but a great deal to reduce animal suffering, whilst another person has done little or nothing to reduce human suffering or animal suffering, then I think that the moral advantage in this respect, if not necessarily in all respects, lies with the former.

Another common criticism made by bullfighting supporters: you oppose bullfighting but you eat meat! This particular criticism can't be made of me - I've been a vegetarian for over thirty years. I'd wish to defend meat-eating bullfighting opponents, though. The argument used in the previous paragraph is applicable here, in modified form. I doubt if there are many vegetarian bullfighting supporters. I don't have the results of any meticulous surveys but I would think that almost every one eats meat. If one person eats meat and opposes the cruelty of the bullfight and another person eats meat and supports the bullfight, then the moral advantage in this respect lies with the former.

If someone eats meat but takes care to eat meat from animals which have been humanely reared and humanely killed, then at least this is to observe the basic standards of animal husbandry and slaughter. There are abuses and imperfections in slaughterhouses, sometimes substantial, but at least it can be claimed that in a modern, well-regulated system, an attempt is made to ensure that slaughter is instantaneous and painless. Slaughter in the bull-ring is in anything but controlled conditions. It's impossible to ensure that the sword is placed so as to ensure instantaneous death. The bullfighter is often terrified of being gored as the sword goes in, so that the 'aim' is far from accurate. For whatever reason, again and again, the sword strikes bone, or is embedded in an animal which is still very much alive. If slaughter in the modern abattoir falls short of the ideal, sometimes very much so, then slaughter in the bull-ring is vastly more objectionable.

Bullfighting apologists in my experience are usually fond of very short, supposedly conclusive but not at all conclusive arguments, such as this objection to meat-eating bullfight opponents. They're not nearly so good at addressing a very wide range of issues in depth, in detail.

Other forms of bullfighting

On this page, I discuss the 'corrida,' the form of bullfighting practised in Spain, the bullfighting countries of Latin America and Southern France. Southern France has other forms of bullfighting as well and Portugal has its own form of bullfight. A page which gives useful information about the Portuguese bullfight and is well written, although with typographic errors. Quotations below are from this page.

The Portuguese bullfight is less objectionable than the corrido but is barbaric and activists do well to oppose it. The Portuguese bullfight is far from being bloodless. As in the corrido, the bull is stabbed with six banderillas and these are heavier than the ones used in the Spanish bullfight. This phase of the bullfight is brutal. The bull isn't killed in the arena, but it is killed later, and it may well wait for slaughter, suffering from its wounds, until the next morning or longer. Horses in the Portuguese bullfight in general suffer far, far less than in the corrido but the risk of severe injury and death is always present.

'The horses themselves, a cross of Arab and English thoroughbred, are animals of great beauty, quite unlike the horses in the Spanish bullfight, who are there primarily to be gored by the bull, and consequently, are beat-up old nags that can barely carry their mounts on a hot afternoon.' [Although horses are often gored in the Spanish bullfight, they aren't there 'primarily to be gored by the bull,' but they are there to be charged by the bull, hit by the bull and lifted by the bull, with all that this implies when the bull moves so fast and weighs about half a tonne.]

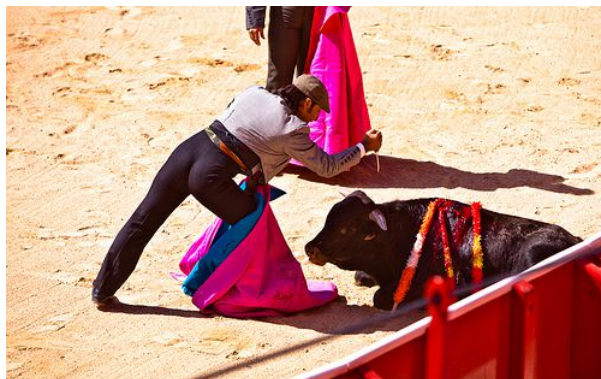
Even so, the horses in the Portuguese bullfight are terrorized: '[a difficulty which] the horseman overcomes is the fear of his horse. Anyone who rides horses will know that courage is not one of the virtues of the animal, which shies even from a pile of rubble at the side of the road. Imagine, then, the control necessary to get this nervous animal to ride toward a charging, half-ton hulk of bull. Naturally, use of the spurs is necessary, and even the best of the horsemen leave unaesthetic patches of blood on the sides of their mounts from repeated spurring.'

In fact, the dangers to horses in Portuguese bullfights are similar to the dangers of the horses of the rejoneadors in Spanish bullfights. This film shows what may happen to them: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=rN2q5YiNFAE

Pamplona: a proposal

Efforts to carry out reform or to abolish abuses are always more difficult when reform or abolition involves an opponent which has great economic power. There is, of course, no linkage between economic power and powerful ethical arguments in favour. The fighting in the Roman amphitheatres brought economic benefits but required abolition. The festival of San Fermin at Pamplona involves not just bull running but bull-fighting. Scenes from bullfights at Pamplona are shown below.





One of the bulls which ran at Pamplona earlier in the day. The sword-thrust (or perhaps multiple sword-thrusts) failed to kill it, as usual, and the animal is finished off with a dagger.
 Acknowledgments: Maroc's photostream



Another scene from the San Fermin Festival, Pamplona: spearing the bull and terrifying the horse, or worse (but referred to by aficionados as the 'tercio de varas,' the first stage of the bullfight.)

Acknowledgments: Elarequi61's photostream



And another scene from the San Fermin Festival, Pamplona: stabbing the bull with the banderillas (the second stage of the bullfight, the 'tercio de banderillas.')

Acknowledgments: Rufino Lasao's photostream

A San Fermin festival at Pamplona without the bullfight, a

festival without the killing, would do a very great deal for the reputation of Pamplona and the reputation of Spain. The people who have a riotous party at Pamplona and turn their backs on the bullfighter are on the right lines. If only Pamplona could transform itself during its festival into a place of drinking, high spirits, song, debauchery and general excess until the early hours or day and night, a place where there's still the thunder of hooves and people taking their chance with the bulls, but without the barbarity.

This isn't to suggest that having a party and running with the bulls, or watching other people run with the bulls, has anything like the significance so often claimed. These are unimportant rather than important, except for the people who take part. The importance of Pamplona is primarily importance for the local economy. Pamplona shares the narcissistic exaggeration which is the 'soul' of bullfighting. As for the risks to life, running with the bulls, like fighting bulls, is a low-risk activity.

For those who want it, running of the bulls could take place, just as now, offering exactly the same experience, and there could be bloodless bullfights in the arena, like the ones in Southern France, or activities involving bulls such as the 'Recortes.'



A recortador in action

Many animal welfarists would object, claiming, perhaps, that the bulls would be stressed, but I wouldn't. Better this by far than any corrida. Animal welfare, like politics, is the art of the possible. Animal welfare, like politics, is an area where perfectionism is likely to delay effective reform, perhaps for ever, rather than advance it. Reformers, like mountaineers, can attempt near-impossible objectives or objectives that seem impossible but which aren't so. But working for a world in which all living things are without stress, all living things are happy, is to attempt the impossible.

'HillmanMinx,' an uncompromising opponent of bullfighting, included this in one of his comments on a Website: 'I've been to the Pamplona bull run myself - Spain is fascinating, and bulls will always be part of their culture, but it takes little imagination to see that that could continue to be so without the savage cruelty inflicted on the animals.'

Alexander Fiske-Harrison, writing on his other blog, 'The Pamplona Post,' writes something remarkable, for once:

'I forget whether it was Stephen Ibarra or Rick Musica, those pillars of Pamplona, who said that if they took the bulls away from the feria, but kept the people, they'd still come, but if they took away the people, it wouldn't be worth it for the bulls alone.' I don't think people would come in large numbers to a bull-free Pamplona but they would certainly come in large numbers to a bullfight-free Pamplona (a 'corrida-free Pamplona,' that is, a Pamplona where no bulls were killed in the bullring.) A Pamplona which offered thrills, excitement, riotous living and took away the abject barbarity would be worth supporting. As it is, no humane person should support the San Fermin festival.

The probability of a Pamplona with bull-running but no bullfighting is probably remote, but if other towns offered bull-running but no bullfighting (except perhaps for bloodless bullfighting or activities such as 'Recortes,' these towns could attract many, many people who attend the San Fermin festival at Pamplona but who have qualms about the cruelty of the corrida, or no interest in the corrida. They could offer real competition to Pamplona. Eventually, the economic arguments for Pamplona too abolishing corridas could become very strong.

There are many, many towns and cities in bullfighting areas which could obtain great financial benefits by offering a festival similar to the San Fermin festival, but without the cruelty. Carcassonne in France would be a strong contender, I think. The town introduced corridas not so very long ago. It would gain rather than lose economically if it abolished them and began to offer a festival of the bulls without killing of the bulls. The appearance of the town would certainly be an advantage:

It might be expected that Spanish towns and cities would be particularly resistant to bull-running without corridas, certainly in areas like Andalucia, but the Spanish financial crisis has made the chances of success greater.

Bullfighting and the Spanish financial crisis was the subject of an article published in 'The Times' recently

subject of an article published in *The Times* recently (4 June). A good article, not sympathetic to bullfighting. (Notice the mention of 'the prolonged agony that ends with the estocada (sword thrust.)' ... The crisis that has pushed Spain to the brink of financial ruin has produced (arguably) an unlikely winner – the fighting bull ... 'Rather than ending their lives at the hands of a matador in the ring, increasing numbers of toros bravos are being slaughtered for their meat, a quick exit in an abattoir that is seen as somewhat kinder to [than] the prolonged agony that ends with the estocada (sword thrust).

'Since the financial crisis began, the number of bullfights has fallen by 46 per cent, from 2,177 in 2007 to 1,177 last year, according to government figures, a decline partly attributable to cultural changes but accelerated by economic decline.

'The cost of going to a bullfight has put off many fans ... Local councils, which traditionally have paid for bullfights during civic festivals, have cut back on such expenditures. And the high cost of raising a fighting bull ... has hit breeders ...

' "We are looking for other sources of business," Carlos Nunez, president of the Association of Fighting Bull Breeders, said. "We hope we can bring in tourists to see the bulls." ...'

Andalucia's economic problems are severe. 'The Atlantic' gives a brief account which includes this:

'82.1 percent of 16 to 19 year-olds and 63.1 percent of 20 to 24 years looking for work can't find it. In total, 66.4 percent of people under 25 are unemployed.'

This site isn't in the least a single issue site and although I concentrate on bullfighting on this page, understandably enough, it's not to the exclusion of other issues. I make this completely clear. The Spanish financial crisis isn't important only in its effects on bullfighting. The Spanish financial crisis is important, obviously, for a whole host of reasons. This is one of them: extreme financial difficulty - and the crisis may become worse, immeasurably worse - will often be the precursor of extreme political instability, instability which may even lead to wars. This is one of the extreme dangers facing Europe as a whole, far more than a very remote possibility for Europe as a whole, which everyone must hope will never materialize. Politicians and others have to do more than hope, however: they have to take decisions, often very difficult decisions.

It's impossible to generalize. There are Spanish people living very pampered, very wasteful lives - aficionados amongst them - for whom it's impossible to feel any sympathy if they suffer hardship. There are also many, many good people in Spain - active opponents of bullfighting amongst them - who face extreme hardship, and many good causes in Spain likewise, and not just the anti-bullfighting causes.

The duties of Spanish politicians aren't in the least confined to issues to do with bullfighting and taking steps to abolish bullfighting is only one issue with which they should be concerned. This is an elementary consideration. Opponents of bullfighting have to take care not to overlook or to minimize the responsibilities and skills of politicians, which obviously include matters such as taxation policy, planning policy, fiscal regulation, defence expenditure, and so much else.

Financial and economic considerations have an impact on bullfighting but the decline of bullfighting and the defeat of bullfighting interests have to be based on more secure grounds. Otherwise, the ending of the financial crisis in Spain could end this particular threat to bullfighting.

Ethical issues remain paramount. Pamplona's bullfighting connections bring it great economic benefit, but the same can be said of many morally flawed and morally disastrous practices. From a very different sphere, a flood of imports of cheap clothing, produced by badly paid, in fact, exploited workers, many of them children, has economic benefits for many people. Again, these are elementary considerations.

I resist completely any suggestion that in situations of crisis, only issues which are relevant to the crisis are important. Unless it becomes more or less impossible, interest in the full range of human issues (which include issues to do with animals) should continue as before. There are many historical examples to show that this has been the case. The stupendous cultural achievements of 5th century Athens were achieved despite the fact that Athens fought the Peloponnesian War. The fact that Athens' survival was so often in doubt didn't lead to any ignoring of architecture, drama and other fields. During the Second World War, many, many books were published in Britain which had nothing to do with the winning of the war or Britain's fight for survival - books on poetry and so much else.

Similarly with events in other countries. The atrocities and suffering in Syria don't consign the struggle to end bullfighting to irrelevance.

Freedom of expression

I've never at any time attempted to suppress pro-bullfighting views. Anti-bullfighting activists who do try to suppress pro-bullfighting views are very much mistaken - not mistaken about bullfighting, obviously, but very much mistaken in opposing the free flow of ideas.

All attempts to suppress pro-bullfighting books or other printed materials, to suppress pro-bullfighting films or internet materials, to suppress pro-bullfighting talks and lectures, are deeply misguided. In 'the marketplace of ideas,' I regard anti-bullfighting

arguments as decisively, overwhelmingly superior to pro-bullfighting arguments. The anti-bullfighting case needs no censorship of pro-bullfighting views at all.

The principle that there should be a free flow of ideas, information and evidence is a principle under attack. It's essential to defend it. I know of one organization which called upon a bookseller to remove a pro-bullfighting book from sale and was successful. This was a bad mistake on the part of the organization and the bookseller. There are many threats to freedom of expression, threats which may be veiled or violent. They come from believers in political correctness, Islamists and others. A bookshop should be under no pressure to deny shelf-space to books which criticize political correctness, Islam and bullfighting and books which support political correctness, Islam and bullfighting, and similarly for other issues. Before I could read Alexander Fiske-Harrison's *Into the Arena* it was necessary for me to buy a copy. The idea that I should be expected to criticize Alexander Fiske-Harrison's defence of bullfighting on the basis of a few things I'd heard, without having read the book, is repugnant. My very critical discussion is given below. It includes information about Alexander Fiske-Harrison's censorship of my own comments but I include a further example here.

Alexander Fiske-Harrison writes on his blog, 'By the way, I have noticed that various animal rights protesters are complaining that I have blocked their comments on this blog. Well, that's easy enough to answer: I will post any comment that is civil and unthreatening.' This is simply not true. One comment I sent to him simply gave some of the material in the previous paragraphs about the importance of supporting freedom of expression for writers on bullfighting such as himself. That comment was blocked, perhaps because it included this: 'I regard anti-bullfighting arguments as decisively, overwhelmingly superior to pro-bullfighting arguments. The anti-bullfighting case needs no censorship of pro-bullfighting views at all.' The comment I submitted was completely civil and unthreatening, and all the other comments I submitted have been completely civil and unthreatening, but have been censored by him, except for a much earlier set of comments, very brief, simply stating my intention to discuss 'Into the Arena.'

I showed that his reaction to one comment could easily be explained - he'd simply not read most of what I'd written, by his own admission. He was condemning what he hadn't read. He refused to post this as well. I'd raised one particular issue which he seems determined not to discuss openly - the fact that the bull he killed had blunt horns and had apparently been subjected to the procedure called 'afeitado,' judging by the photographs in 'Into the Arena.' This would have made the bull - which was in any case far from being a full-sized animal - much less risky to fight.

After this mention of suppression of views by Alexander Fiske-Harrison, I return to suppression of views by some anti-bullfighting activists.

The British bullfighter Frank Evans planned to give a talk at a bookshop in Manchester. It was cancelled because of the threat of disruption. Again, this was a bad mistake. Alexander Fiske-Harrison was invited to give a talk at Blackwell's bookshop in Oxford, death threats were made, allegedly, and the talk was rescheduled. I obtained a ticket for the event.

On his Website, Alexander Fiske-Harrison writes, 'I am happy to announce that unlike Salman Rushdie, I will actually be talking at my venue - Blackwell's of Oxford - regardless of protests.' It would have been better if he hadn't invited readers to compare his situation with that of Salman Rushdie. The danger in which Salman Rushdie found himself was incomparably more serious than the dangers facing Alexander Fiske-Harrison. As in the case of his exploits in the ring, Alexander Fiske-Harrison exaggerates the dangers he faces. The animal rights movement (for the record, I'd describe myself as involved in animal welfare, as one activity among many, not animal rights) includes dangerous as well as deluded people, but their dangerousness (their lethal intent) isn't to be equated with the fanatics who were out to get Salman Rushdie and anyone associated with his book, 'The Satanic Verses.' In that case, lethal intentions were followed by lethal results. Destruction of property in the name of animal rights is quite another matter. It has been far more extensive than media reports would suggest. I discuss briefly the Animal Liberation Front and its misguided and ineffectual tactics in my page Animal welfare: arrest and activism.

Then Alexander Fiske-Harrison posted this on his blog:

Following the temporary cancellation of my Oxford talk on my book *Into The Arena* and vastly exaggerated reports of death threats etc. abounding in the Oxford Times and Oxford Mail ... ' If so, why did he make any comparison with Salman Rushdie? In his case, the death threats weren't exaggerated. Now his talk has been cancelled, since hardly any tickets had been requested.

Whatever the level of threats to the author, if bookshops have been put under pressure not to stock Alexander Fiske-Harrison's 'Into the Arena,' (or such books as Hemingway's 'Death in the Afternoon') then is this to be only a starting-point? I discuss the cruelties of foie gras production in the section Three Spanish Restaurants. Bookshops (and libraries) may have many books on their shelves which 'promote' the use of foie gras, particularly books on French cookery, and not just ones on haute cuisine. Are they to be removed? There are many animal rights campaigners who would agree with or use the slogan 'Meat is murder.' But most of these people would have the sense (I hope) to realize that removing all but vegetarian and vegan cookery books from bookshops and libraries is an impossible (as well as undesirable) objective.

No bookshop can be anything like as comprehensive as a large library, of course. Are large libraries - including the largest of them all in this country, the British Library, not to include on their

with all in this country, the British Library - not to include on their shelves 'Into the Arena,' Hemingway's 'Death in the Afternoon' and other books defending bullfighting? Published books *have* to be made available, to scholars, to readers of all kinds - including opponents of the views expressed in some of these books. A good bookshop should give hints of comprehensiveness, at least.

This is very much supplementary information, but the most comprehensive library of all, an imaginary library, is described in a short story by the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges, 'The Library of Babel.' This contains 'all that it is given to express, in all languages. Everything ...'

Running a bookshop is an intensely demanding activity, now more than ever. It's completely wrong to pressurize a bookshop for any of these reasons. If the owner or manager of a bookshop has scheduled a talk by a pro-bullfighting writer for the near future and is approached by a person or an organization asking for the event to be cancelled, what is the owner or manager to do? Abandon all but the most essential duties and spend an intensive week or two studying as many aspects of the issue as possible as thoroughly as possible before coming to a decision? Not forgetting to read 'Into the Arena.' Or assume that the objector's arguments (which are unlikely to be detailed ones - the objector is very unlikely to have read the book) are correct and cancel the event immediately?

The anti-libertarian, pro-censorship 'principle' of 'no platform for ...' doesn't usually take the form of 'no platform for bullfighting supporters.' It's usually no platform for 'racists,' and a variety of other human rather than animal issues (and we're supposed to take it for granted that the objectors are correct in their understanding of 'racist' and 'racism,' that their intelligence and freedom from bias are beyond dispute. They may describe people who want to set limits to immigration into this country as 'racists.')

The rallying cry 'no platform for ...' was applied to Sir Ian Blair, the former Metropolitan Commissioner of Police (by an Indymedia Website) when he came to give a talk at Sussex University.

Similar issues are raised when people who advocate boycotts of Israeli products approach the owner of a shop or the manager of a supermarket which stocks Israeli products. Again, is this owner or manager expected to examine the arguments and evidence in depth before coming to a decision? Or is the owner or manager to assume that the boycotters' case must be correct and clear the shelves of Israeli products at once?

My page on Israel gives detailed information about another attempt to enforce a boycott of Israel. The Israel Philharmonic Orchestra was due to play at the Proms. Pro-Palestinian activists called for the performance to be cancelled. What were the management to do in the week or so after receiving this call? Study the relevant history of the Middle East, and in particular the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, make a comparative study of human rights in Israel and other countries of the Middle East, such as Iran, Syria and the Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, make a further comparative study of war and conflict and of the action which has been taken by democratic countries, totalitarian countries and countries with other forms of government in waging war, including such issues as blockades and protection of non-combatants, study the international legislation concerned with these issues, study the arguments and evidence deployed by supporters of Israel and opponents of Israel, do a little research into moral philosophy and the different approaches to deciding difficult moral issues, such as consequentialism - whilst continuing the intensely demanding task of coordinating the nightly concerts of the Proms season? Or was the management simply to assume that the pro-Palestinian activists must be correct and to cancel the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra's concert without delay - and to add the task of explaining the action to aggrieved concert-goers and defending themselves in the courts for breach of contract to their work-load? In the event, the management stood firm and the concert went ahead, but was disrupted.

Anti-bullfighting censors are far outnumbered by censors of a very different kind, such as radical Islamist censors. They may well be unaware of the context, or indifferent to it: the assaults on freedom of expression from many different directions. Supporting freedom of expression - the general principle - is vital.

The context includes this: 'A talk organised ... by the Queen Mary [University of London] Atheism, Secularism and Humanism Society on 'Sharia Law and Human Rights' had to be cancelled after threats of violence.' Information from the excellent site www.studentrights.org which promotes freedom of speech in universities. The site reports the President of the Atheism, Secularism and Humanism Society and the statement issued by The Principal of Queen Mary College in support of free expression.

The President of the Society:

'Five minutes before the talk was due to start a man burst into the room holding a camera phone and for some seconds stood filming the faces of all those in the room. He shouted 'listen up all of you, I am recording this, I have your faces on film now, and I know where some of you live', at that moment he aggressively pushed the phone in someone's face and then said 'and if I hear that anything is said against the holy Prophet Mohammed, I will hunt you down.' He then left the room and two members of the audience applauded.

'The same man then began filming the faces of Society members in the foyer and threatening to hunt them down if anything was said about Mohammed, he added that he knew where they lived and would murder them and their families. On leaving the building, he joined a large group of men, seemingly there to support him.'

The Principal of the College:

'Professor Simon Gaskell, Principal of Queen Mary, University of

London said: 'we are concerned about reports of a disturbance at a recent meeting of the Atheism, Secularism and Humanism Society.'

'The democratic right to freedom of expression and debate is one Queen Mary strongly upholds and promotes. Talks, meetings and debates are held peacefully at Queen Mary on a daily basis and we will continue to host such events.'

'We are equally committed to our duty of care to students. A police investigation of Monday night's incident is currently underway and Queen Mary will conduct its own review. We will do our utmost to ensure this occurrence is not repeated and that our students are able to gather and engage in debate freely without interference of any kind.'

In this page on Israel I write: 'Countries that can be considered free have been surrendering more and more of their freedoms. Complacency and lack of resolve have allowed them to slide towards an Age of Post-enlightenment. Most often, freedoms have been eroded by the growth of informal censorship, self-censorship, strong disapproval, but sometimes by new legislation.' Kenny Hodgart writes well about one such piece of legislation in this country:

'Freedom of speech was hard-won in the West; the freedom only to speak inoffensively is no freedom at all ... Never mind the freedom to speak offensively: people have been invited to believe there is such a thing as the right not to be offended. Never mind that 'incitement to hatred' is a grey, disputable thing, and a different thing to incitement to violence, which was already a criminal offence. Never mind that most ideas are capable of giving offence ... And never mind that in the marketplace of ideas, 'hate speech' can be challenged, debated or ignored. What we now have is moderated free speech at best.'

Nigel Warburton, in his 'Free Speech: a very short introduction,' writes, 'Defenders of free speech almost without exception recognize the need for some limits to the freedom they advocate.' I think this is true, and well put. I'm a libertarian in matters of free speech but not an absolutist libertarian. In the terminology I use, I recognize {restriction}: (free speech). I discuss {restriction} and the {theme} theory of which it forms a part on other pages.

Nigel Warburton writes, again very cogently:

'Holmes, like Mill, was committed to defending freedom of speech in most circumstances, and, explicitly defended the value of a 'free trade in ideas' as part of a search for truth: 'the best test of truth,' he maintained, 'is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market'. Holmes wrote passionately about what he called the 'experiment' embedded in the US Constitution arguing that we should be 'eternally vigilant' against any attempt to silence opinions we despise unless they seriously threaten the country – hence the 'clear and present danger' test outlined in the quotation above. Holmes as a judge was specifically concerned with how to interpret the First Amendment; his was an interest in the application of the law. Mill in contrast was not writing about legal rights, but about the moral question of whether it was ever right to curtail free speech whether by law, or by what he described as the tyranny of majority opinion, the way in which those with minority views can be sidelined or even silenced by social disapproval.

'Both Mill and Holmes, then, saw that there had to be limits to free speech and that other considerations could on occasion defeat any presumption of an absolute right (legal or moral) to freedom of speech. Apart from the special considerations arising in times of war, most legal systems ... still restrict free expression where, for example, it is libellous or slanderous, where it would result in state secrets being revealed, where it would jeopardize a fair trial, where it involves a major intrusion into someone's private life without good reason, where it results in copyright infringement (e.g. using someone else's words without permission), and also in cases of misleading advertising. Many countries also set strict limits to the kinds of pornography that may be published or used. These are just a selection of the restrictions on speech and other kinds of expression that are common in nations which subscribe to some kind of free speech principle and whose citizens think of themselves as free.'

I'd make the point that 'permitting' is obviously different from 'approving.' 'Permitting whilst loathing' will often be a response in a free society. It expresses my response to Alexander Fiske-Harrison's stance on bullfighting - and his killing of a bull - but I see the need not just to 'permit' the publishing and sale of his book and talks by the author but a passionate upholding of the principle of free expression, if not expression without some {restriction}.

In a wide range of moral and other issues, some of the most fatuous objections often come from people who mechanically point out an alleged inconsistency and ignore the most significant differences. 'You object to bullfighting, but you eat meat!' Alexander Fiske-Harrison, a meat-eater himself, argues along similar lines. (I point this out, as a vegetarian.) 'You object to Iran acquiring nuclear weapons. But Britain has nuclear weapons! (Ignoring the vast differences in political responsibility and restraint.) If German research in atomic physics had been more advanced before the end of the Second World War, then the argument, equally idiotic, might have been, 'You object to Germany acquiring nuclear weapons. But the United States has now acquired nuclear weapons!'

So much for these tidy and unformed minds and their reflex responses.

Bullfighting and tourists

Here I discuss only one aspect - the promotion of bullfighting in

...and, I suppose only on purpose, the promotion of bullfighting in tourist guidebooks, their lazy-minded endorsement, sometimes by writers who should know better. The Madrid guide by Anthony Ham is one example. From <http://www.all-creatures.org/alert/alert-20090309.html>

'The Guide gives ticket agencies for the purchase of bullfighting tickets and where to find a bullfighting museum. Although it quotes polls saying that 75% of Spaniards have no interest in the sport, there is no mention of the large and growing anti-bullfighting movement spreading through Spain.

'The only attempt to show the "other side" is the question "An epic drama of blood and sand or a cruel blood "sport" that has no place in modern Europe? (Page 221)

'But the Madrid guide makes it obvious where the 'Lonely Planet' stands on the question of bullfighting. At the very beginning of the guide a picture is chosen featuring the interior of a pro-bullfighting restaurant concentrating on bullfighting memorabilia. 'They also write: 'Nothing can exceed the gaiety and sparkle of a Spanish public going eager and full-dressed to the fight' (Page 101) 'at once picturesque, compelling theatre and an ancient ritual that sees 30,000 bulls killed in 17,000 bullfights each year in Spain.' (Page 222)

'Tony Moore, Chairman of FAACE, wrote to the Editor on the 7th of January 2009 saying

'Your writer would be better employed making a good job of researching what is a very controversial subject instead of repeating the same old staid clichés. One wonders if he is just lazy or in the pocket of the bullfighting industry. 'You are doing no favors to Spain; they want to break away from the outdated and cruel picture that bullfighting paints, ask you to make sure that when the subject of bullfighting is mentioned in one of your travel guides, if you do not condemn it, at least you should not promote it!

There was no reply to his letter.

The author of the guidebook wrote this, but not as part of the guidebook. It was written in 2006 but the situation seems not to have improved - for bullfighting's defenders, that is - since then. For one thing, they have been defeated in Barcelona and the rest of Catalonia. They've made attempts to minimize the ban on bullfighting and explain it away but there's evidence that when it did happen, it was regarded as a severe setback.

'That bullfighting should become a thing of the past in separatist Barcelona is less important than that public apathy is taking hold in Madrid, Valencia and Andalusia, Spain's bastions of bullfighting. "Before, you put up a poster and the people came," says Juan Carlos Beca Belmonte, the manager of Madrid's Las Ventas bullring, Spain's most prestigious plaza de toros. "Now we are the ones who have to chase after the crowd." Luis Corrales, president of the Platform in Defence of the Bull Festival, says: "There used to be only bullfighting or soccer, or maybe a movie. But now there are so many other leisure choices." Spanish state television, mindful of the corrida's diminishing appeal, has also cut by almost one-third the air time it devotes to bullfighting, and many private channels no longer broadcast from the ring. The concomitant fall in advertising revenues is exacerbating the financial crisis confronting bullring operators, who must pay up to \$50,000 for a full quota of bulls and as much as \$575,000 for a top matador and his entourage for a single corrida. To break even for each fight, promoters must sell at least 75 per cent of seats. At one level, rumours of bullfighting's demise are premature, for this remains a multimillion-dollar industry that employs 150,000 Spaniards. Every year, Spain's 60 major bullrings draw about 20 million spectators who pay \$1.35 billion into the industry's coffers. The mid-May Fiesta de San Isidro in Madrid, which heralds the start of Spain's most important bullfighting season, is a major social event where the great and good of Spain gather to be seen in illustrious company. Matadors, defined by their statuesque grace, dazzling traje de luces (suit of lights) and glamorous lifestyles, are national celebrities whose private lives are dissected by Spain's scandalised and scandalous prensa rosa (pink press). But the fact that the average Spaniard is now more likely to know a bullfighter's face from the pages of a magazine than they are to have seen him in the bullring reinforces the widely held view that bullfighting's glory days have passed. The figures that attest to the size of the industry also conceal the serious financial difficulties that confront almost every major bullring. Even members of the bullfighting fraternity admit that they no longer stand at the centre of Spanish life. "My goal is for bullfighting to form a part of today's society, instead of remaining on the margins," says Alejandro Seaz, a Spanish businessman and bullfighting promoter. Of far greater concern for supporters of bullfighting are two simple, telling statistics: the average spectator at Las Ventas bullring in Madrid is a fiftysomething male and just 17 per cent of Spaniards younger than 24 say that they are at least "somewhat interested" in bullfighting. In an attempt to attract a younger generation of bullfighting aficionados, and in order to pay the bills, promoters have been forced to transform the amphitheatre-style bullrings into multipurpose arenas. Bullfights now share the stage with rock concerts, and sanitised performances akin to circuses (where the bulls are not killed and acrobats leap over the bulls' horns) have begun to replace the traditional battle to the death between man and beast. In Valencia, ticket prices, which for keynote bullfights can run as high as \$200, have been slashed, cocktail bars installed and free glossy magazines handed out so as to widen the corrida's appeal. In the largely conservative world of bullfighting, however, resistance remains to the idea that the tradition must reinvent itself. The corrida is an essential pillar of Spanish cultural identity, their argument runs, and something quintessentially Spanish would be forever lost were bullfighting forced to change. According to Jose Maria Garcia-Lujan, a

lawyer involved in the running of Las Ventas: "They don't like to touch anything, lest the magic wear off". There are nonetheless signs that the magic may have already worn off for an industry showing the unmistakable signs of permanent decline. Increasingly abandoned by younger Spaniards, tarnished by sordid kiss-and-tell scandals and suddenly peripheral in the country of its birth, bullfighting is being forced to ask whether it can survive as a viable tradition beyond the current generation of aficionados. The question has been asked before, not least by Hemingway, one of bullfighting's most trenchant defenders, who wrote in the 1930s: "How long the bullfight survives as a lynchpin of Spanish life probably depends on whether the majority of the population thinks it makes them feel good." Whether because bullfighting no longer makes Spaniards feel good or simply because they have better things to do with their time, the answer has never been less certain.'

I don't use trends and opinion polls to argue against bullfighting, but I think that the opinions here help to explain why defenders of bullfighting are worried.

Some defenders of bullfighting

Alexander Fiske-Harrison: The Baboon and Bull Killing Club



Not Alexander Fiske-Harrison but José Tomás: the bullfight as horror film. (Acknowledgments: luispita.com)

Alexander Fiske-Harrison decided that to understand bullfighting and to understand himself, he had to kill a bull. He trained with bullfighters and has now killed a bull, or, to be precise, mortally wounded a bull. What he did was to stab a bull repeatedly. It was finished off by someone else, a bullfighter called Rafaelillo. Alexander Fiske-Harrison's first sword-thrust struck bone. His second sword-thrust struck bone. His third sword-thrust was 'behind the proper killing spot.' His helper swung his cape on one side of the bull and then he swung his muleta on the other side, the standard technique of making the bull turn this way and that, so that the sword embedded deep in his body would move around and sever some vital organ: a hideous way of trying to ensure death, and very often completely unsuccessful. He was reassured to find that 'the bull was dying. I could see his legs shaking now.' And 'Rafaelillo came over with the *descabello* sword to sever the nervous link between brain and spinal column.' In the professional bullring, a long time may elapse between the first sword thrust and the stabbing with the *descabello*. The book gives no indication of the time it took for the wounded bull to die.

This killing was regarded as outstanding. He writes, 'please note that two misses, *pinchazos* [hitting bone with the sword] followed by a killing strike on your first animal is absolutely unheard of ...' The death of the first animal is usually much more messy and protracted. The death of bulls at the hands of the most experienced bullfighters is often messy and protracted. In the Prologue of 'Into the Arena' he writes of bullfighting, 'When it was done well, it seemed a good thing; when done badly it was an unmitigated sin.' On his blog, he gives great prominence to this: 'I can't think of many spectacles in the world which are evil when done badly but good when done well.' 'But he knew for certain that his own performance would be without 'artistry,' the people who came to watch him - nearly a hundred of them, including his parents - knew that it would be without artistry. In the Prologue, he writes of bullfighting, By this principle, he has to regard his own fight and killing as an 'unmitigated sin' or 'evil.' Alexander Fiske-Harrison, the other bullfighters present and the spectators, including Alexander Fiske-Harrison's parents, were all morally culpable.

He was about to kill a bull and the spectators were about to witness a killing which couldn't even be justified by the warped reasoning of bullfighting supporters (as I see it), a killing by someone who would never make a 'career' out of his performance, someone who was killing for the sake of his inner compulsions and his book, and death for the bull which was unlikely to be instantaneous and in the event wasn't at all quick, even if quicker than many of the long-drawn out deaths which shame Spain, France and the other countries of the *corrida*.

The death he planned to inflict had no justifications of necessity - other than the satisfaction of his inner compulsion, and of course the book. Whilst running in Seville he injures his knee, although he can still flex it, but he decides that his fight couldn't be postponed. 'Rescheduling that many people - and by which I mean those intrinsic to the fight - simply could not be done in the near future, certainly not within the projected publication date of the book.'

After the killing, he becomes very thoughtful. A bullfighter asks him, 'What did you feel?'

'I tried to answer, 'Mi corazón esturo con el toro muerto en la plaza. [My heart was with the dead bull in the ring.] I just wanted to go and sit with him in the ring with a bottle of whisky. Only he understood now.'

I believe that Alexander Fiske-Harrison is making a film about bullfighting. He could consider a dramatic adaptation of this scene - the words softly spoken, accompanied by sentimental, sloppy music. He could consider this title for the drama, a long one, but, there are longer: 'Only the dead bull understands the one who kills him.'

To imagine that to understand killing it's necessary to kill - this is a crude, cruel and disastrously misguided notion of understanding. To understand the mind of a different kind of killer, a murderer, one uses reflection, insight and other qualities of the mind, one doesn't kill someone, of course. Dostoevsky's incomparable insights into the mind of the murderer Raskolnikov in 'Crime and Punishment' was achieved by these means. Another crude, cruel and disastrously misguided notion of understanding: A A Gill, a restaurant critic, claimed that he shot a baboon 'to get a sense of what it might be like to kill someone ... What does it really feel like to shoot someone, or someone's close relative?' He wrote (in 'The Sunday Times') 'I took him just below the armpit. He slumped and slid sideways. I'm told they can be tricky to shoot: they run up trees, hang on for grim life. They die hard, baboons. But not this one. A soft-nosed .357 blew his lungs out.'

The Club Taurino of London caters for the depraved tastes of the aficionado-voyeur, who feels the psychological need to watch killing. I offer an argument in moral philosophy which I've called, for convenience, **The Argument from The Baboon and Bull Killing Club**. Defenders of bullfighting very often claim that watching bullfighting is justifiable because the kind of experience available to the spectators outweighs the suffering of the animals. (Many defenders of bullfighting argue - or simply assume - that animals can't suffer, as in the case of those who maintain that 'animals have no souls.' These individuals are mentioned in 'Into the Arena.') Alexander Fiske-Harrison and A A Gill believe that killing an animal - a bull and a baboon in their case - is justified on account of the kind of experience which they gained. Presumably, many, many other people would also have similar experiential benefits if they too killed an animal? If their example were imitated, and many, many animals were killed for the sake of the experience (provided it were legal in the country) would they approve or disapprove? I believe, of course, that their whim, craving, need, whatever it may be, is far from harmless and not to be imitated. In the case of killing for these reasons, and watching killing as a spectator, the moral arguments against are decisive, it seems to me. It would be morally wrong to set up a Club for killers of animals, but clubs such as the Club Taurino of London, which cater for spectators of killing and which foster and encourage public killing of animals, are morally unjustifiable too.

Giles Coren, another restaurant critic, and a defender of bullfighting, has fantasized about killing. He posted this on twitter "Next door have bought their 12-year-old son a drum kit. For fuck's sake! Do I kill him then burn it? Or do I fuck him, then kill him then burn it?" These thoughts would have been better left buried in his consciousness ... not everything that is thought should be spoken, not everything that is spoken should be published. (But see also my discussion of freedom of expression.)

Alexander Fiske-Harrison is a friend of Giles Coren. His blog shows the two comrades watching a bullfight. If Alexander Fiske-Harrison's defence of bullfighting seems far more sophisticated than that of his fellow enthusiast, appearances are deceptive. He's got ample reserves of simple-mindedness too.

This is one of the milder examples. The quote is from Mark Rowland's review in 'The Times Literary Supplement,' a review which seems to have enraged AF-H:

'After being present at the killing of a bull in practice, Fiske-Harrison gets blood on his hands. He writes: 'I went straight to Flaherty's, Seville's Irish pub ... and ordered a large glass of Johnny Walker, sitting staring at it with the blood from the great, dead bull staining my hands pink and my nails black. It took days to wash out.'

'This does seem a little narcissistic ... While having no direct experience of the blood of a recently deceased Spanish bull, I would be very surprised if it were that difficult to remove from one's hands. And, so I cannot allay the suspicion that Fiske-Harrison is sitting in the bar with blood on his hands because he enjoys it, his little red badge of courage.'

Victor Hugo wrote, 'It is good to wash one's hands, but to prevent blood from being spilled on them would be better.' ('The Last Day of a Condemned Man.') The reference isn't to bullfighting, but the words are apposite.

The photograph at the beginning of this section shows the matador Jose Tomás in action (the blood here is from the bull, not his own). Alexander Fiske-Harrison has things to say about Jose Tomas and blood in the book, seemingly oblivious of his own milder obsession.

He writes of the matador, 'He divided the aficionados ... the reason I had most often heard is that he fights with '*demasiado sangre*', 'too much blood', and by blood, they mean his own. Even a cursory glance through the press cuttings of his bullfights shows his face and body drenched in blood like something from a Jacobean tragedy.' Or a horror film.

Haematophilia is a form of fetishism - an intense interest, often of a sexual kind, in blood. The bullfight as blood fetishism - this is a

neglected area of research.

One of the quotations which precede the Prologue is this, simple-minded, pompous and inflated rather than deeply impressive, surely:

Ser un torero es como hablar con Dios
[To be a bullfighter is like talking to God]
Eduardo Dávila Miura (matador)

He has some insight into the cruelty of the bullfight, but his lack of insight into 'the sick and decadent claims to importance, the romanticized exaggeration, the flagrant myth-making,' as I put it in the introduction, is obvious.

This is an inbred world, generally oblivious of the achievements - including achievements that require enormous courage - of the world outside, achievements which vastly surpass those of the bullfighters. Alexander Fiske-Harrison settles into this world of extreme (restriction), despite the moral qualms he advertises occasionally, and long before the end of the book he seems to be at complete ease there. But throughout, as early as the book's Prologue, Alexander Fiske-Harrison can be as uncritical as any bullfighting slob who ever slouched on a bullring cushion. In his account of the bullring in Seville, of the first bullfight he witnessed, he gives us this: 'The gate was opened ... by Manolo Artero, a stout middle-aged man, who shouted to the rustling crowd the words he had shouted for thirty years: 'Silence! A man risks his life here today.' How impressive the words of Manolo Artero sound to bullfighting supporters, how stupid to other people, ones with a healthy sense of the ridiculous and an appreciation of equally dangerous acts or far more dangerous acts. The last fatality in this ring was in 1992. This was the last fatality in any bullring in Spain.

Later in the book, he writes, of a small bullring, 'It is not a place where one would wish to be gored by a bull. How good, I wonder, is the local doctor and how far is the nearest hospital? it is the length of the journey to the hospital that kills the matador as much as the bull's horns.

For injured mountaineers, on the other hand, the hospital is much further. Above, I write,

'On high mountains, the ferocity of the winds and blizzards often make a rescue from outside impossible until it is too late. Rescue facilities are well organized in the Alps, not at all in the Himalayas and the Andes. Even in the Alps, bad weather can delay rescue for days, or rescue may be impossible. For the mountaineer, safety and medical help are generally far, far away.'

Mountaineers don't have the comforting knowledge that an equivalent of the 'Burladero' is close by. There are a number of these convenient things around the bullring. John McCormick: 'Burladero: a narrow wooden shield ... permitting the torero to slip to safety when necessary but wide enough for the toro not to pursue him.'

Again and again, Alexander Fiske-Harrison stresses the death-defying exploits of bullfighters, completely oblivious, it seems, to something else which he wrote in the book (published in 2011): '... no torero has died in the ring in Spain since 1992.' The bullring isn't, it seems, anything like the deathtrap commonly portrayed by bullfighting apologists.

I don't have an exact figure for the number of bullfights which took place in that period of not far short of twenty years (taking account of the time between writing and publication, of course) but it will probably have been in excess of 17 000, with the death of at least 100 000 bulls. And the number of bullfighters killed in that period, by his account: 0. Whether the bull has been a bull of the Saltillo breed, the Miura breed (described by Alexander Fiske-Harrison as 'the bulls of death') or some other breed, including the taurine equivalent of mongrels, whether the bull has been massive, heavy and powerful or tiny, in taurine terms, whether the bullfighter has had long experience in taurine slaughter or virtually none, whether the bullfighter is amateur, like Alexander Fiske-Harrison, or professional, not one bullfighter has been killed in all that long period.

An appreciative piece by Victoria Aitken on the site www.thewip.net includes this: 'the book is extremely well researched' and 'According to Fiske-Harrison's research, one in four matadors die in the ring.' There's no mention of this particular piece of 'research' in the book. If she had taken the trouble to read the book, all the book, she would have found that there's no mention of it at all, only a mention of the complete lack of fatalities. I haven't been able to find any mention of the 'one in four' statistics anywhere but Victoria Aitken's piece. Alexander Fiske-Harrison needs to present evidence and to explain himself. Unless he can come up with convincing evidence, which seems very unlikely, the claim seems justified that bullfighters risk serious injury in the bullring but not to any significant extent death: the courage needed to face the risk of serious injury is less than the courage needed to face death. Aristotle writes succinctly about degrees of courage in the Nicomachean Ethics (III, 115a, 25.)

'What, then, are the fearful things which concern the courageous person? The most fearful of all ... now the most fearful of all is death ...'

περὶ ποῖα οὖν τῶν φοβερῶν
ὁ ἀνδρείος; ἢ περὶ τὰ μέγιστα;
... φοβερώτατον δ' ὀθάνατος;

Alexander Fiske-Harrison refers to bulls which refuse to play the

game (not his words) and fight but a striking omission from the book is any discussion of tampering with the bull before the fight, a notorious way of reducing the danger to the bullfighter. One method of tampering or doctoring, sawing off the tips of the horns, 'afeitado' in Spanish, is referred to in the report of Antonio Lorca in the newspaper ABC, published in 2008 and referring to bullfighting in Seville: 'At first sight they looked like bulls, with long hoofs, and horns looking suspiciously doctored, but in reality they were kittens.' Bruce Schoenfeld, a bullfighting enthusiast, writes of bullfights in Seville, 'The trappings remain the same year after year. Unfortunately, so does the deplorable condition of many of the bulls fought in Sevilla. Because the so-called sophisticated crowds here want to see artistic bullfighting, breeders send animals that are smaller, less dangerous and theoretically easier to work with ... In actuality, bulls in Sevilla often come out weak and docile, tiring so easily that sometimes they simply fall down on their own accord, even without a sword thrust.' This seems a very naive comment for someone who has written so much about bullfighting. He seems not to acknowledge the distinct possibility, or likelihood, that the bulls are so weak and docile and tire so easily because they have been subjected before entering the ring to one or other of the standard methods of ensuring that the bull is weak, docile and tires easily.

Jérôme Lescure's very disturbing film entitled 'A Two Hour Killing' (commentary in French, the images overwhelming) shows sawing of the horns being performed, followed by monstrous cruelties in corridas in five places in the South of France. (You may need to scroll down a little way to locate the arrow button you click on to start the film.) The cruelties include the use of capes to make the bull turn its head from side to side, in the hope of making the sword embedded in the animal cut a vital organ - the same technique used in Alexander Fiske-Harrison's debut as a would-be bull-killer - and the severing of the spine when this fails to work. In the film, the bulls are stabbed with a dagger rather than the descabello, the sword which was used to end the life of *Conséjote* after Alexander Fiske-Harrison had finished stabbing him.

The man performing the sawing and reshaping in the film says 'Afeitado, c' est interdit, mais tout le monde le fait,' 'Afeitado is forbidden but everyone does it.' (The 'everyone' is obviously hyperbolic.) Another method of tampering with the bull is administration of massive doses of sulphates or salt. I sent this next paragraph to him, for posting in the comments section of the site he uses for promotion of 'Into the Arena' and discussion of its themes.

' 'Afeitado,' as you know, is the practice of sawing off the horn tips of the bull, the action disguised by further work. (The video 'A two-hour killing' shows it being performed on a bull before a French bullfight.) Like other well known practices, not universal but common, such as the dosing of the bull with a substance of one kind or another, afeitado decreases the risk to the bullfighter substantially. Illustration 13 in your book 'Into the Arena' shows you fighting the bull which you later killed - or rather the bullfighter Rafaelillo killed, by severing the spine, after you had made repeated attempts to kill the bull with your sword. The photograph shows clearly that the tips of this bull's horns are missing [I missed this when I first looked at the photograph. It was the anti-bullfighting campaigner 'HillmanMinx' who noticed the missing horn tips, on a Web photograph], not only making it more difficult for the bull to fight but reducing the risk of serious injury to you, blunt horns obviously having much less penetrating power than sharp horns. Do you have a comment? Were the horns of this bull sawn before your fight to make the horns blunt, was this bull chosen for your fight because it had these blunt horns, or is there another explanation? I write as an opponent of bullfighting.'

This material was 'awaiting moderation' for some time but eventually, the information was given that it had been 'deleted.' So he decided not to bring the matter to the attention of his readers and he decided that he had no need to answer the questions, or would rather that he didn't answer the questions. It seems to me that he fought an incapacitated bull. If he claims otherwise, then he needs to present evidence and argue his case - preferably without making the personal smears against me that he did on this occasion, after the information about deletion.

The American aficionado John McCormick writes about afeitado in his book 'Bullfighting: art, technique and Spanish society': 'Horn shaving (and other abuses to the toro) create a parody of the fiesta because it upsets the toro's timing, and therefore allows the torero to take 'risks' that look suicidal but are not so.

' ... the toro is lured into a narrow corral, trussed with ropes to the point where he is immobile, and 2 or 3 inches (called 'the diamond') are sawed off each horn with a hack-saw. The entire horn is then reshaped by filing, including a sharp point, but the toro has been raped of his life-long training in the precise use of his horns ... After filing, the horn may be rubbed with mud and dung to dirty up the dirty work ... Whoever has tried to force pills down a cat's throat is prepared to appreciate the effect upon the toro of being trussed by ropes and violated by the saw and the file; in addition, if the saw cuts too far down, tissue will be torn, and pain and perhaps fever follow, just as though one were to cut deeply into the flesh of one's nails.'

He follows this with a comment about the transportation of bulls to the ring: 'The length of the journey alone, during which the animals take neither food nor water, weakens them.'

This film (with commentary in French) shows the bull 'lured into a narrow corral, trussed with ropes to the point where he is immobile' and then subjected to sawing of the horn tips. The process is shown towards the end of the film - after a succession of shocking images, with diagrams which show exactly what the various stabbing implements (such as the 'rejones de castigo' or

'lances of punishment') do to the bull. A bull is shown with the 'killing sword' sticking out of its flanks. Phil Davison writing just before the 1994 bullfighting 'season' began. There's no evidence that afeitado is any less of an issue now.'

El afeitado (horn-shaving) has been an unprecedented scandal this year,' said the then Interior Minister, Jose Luis Corcuera, at the end of last season. Unprecedented, perhaps, but hardly new. Permit me to cite the words of another ageing and near burnt-out scribe written 34 years ago.

'To protect the leading matadors, the bulls' horns had been cut off at the points and then shaved and filed down so that they looked like real horns. But they were as tender at the points as a fingernail that has been cut to the quick and if the bull could be made to bang them against the planks of the barrera, they would hurt so that he would be careful about hitting anything else. . . .
'With the length of the horn shortened, the bull lost his sense of distance, too, and the matador was in much less danger.' Thus wrote Ernest Hemingway in 1960 in *The Dangerous Summer*, hardly his best book but certainly his last. 'A bull whose horns have been altered is at least 10 times as safe to work and kill as a bull with its horns intact,' the great man calculated.

'Bullfighting critics' descriptions of individual bulls are increasingly headed with the euphemism 'sospechoso de pitones' (suspicion over the horns).'

In Chapter 3, Alexander Fiske-Harrison notes of a cow due to be fought, '... I am surprised to see the farm manager cut the tips of its horns off with bolt-cutters. When it gets up, blood pumps out of the horns with little pulses of the heart, like water from a drinking fountain on an alternating current.' [This is rubbish, of course. A pump which uses alternating current shows no difference in its mode of working from one which uses direct current.] I do not ask why they do this, I merely watch.' Were bolt-cutters used on the bull which Alexander Fiske-Harrison took part in killing?

He certainly fought against a bull with blunt horns. No attempt had been made to reshape the horns and make them pointed, but it seems clear that this bull was not nearly so dangerous as he claims, as in the caption which accompanies Illustration 13: 'There are faults here. I am just happy to be alive.'

'British writer risks death in the afternoon' was the title of a depressingly large number of pieces by writers unaware of the real level of the risk of death during his fight - very, very low, with those blunt horns, the horns too of a young and undersized bull. Even if the horns had been sharp, his survival in the ring would have been overwhelmingly likely. Where are the fatality statistics which show that apprentice bullfighters, bullfighters killing their first bull, are at great risk of death? How many of the reviewers read all of the book? If they had, they would have found Alexander Fiske-Harrison's unintentionally revealing fatality statistics which make the title 'British writer risks death in the afternoon' ludicrously dramatic.

Bullfighting apologists can easily remember the lost bullfighters, the mortals but near-immortals whose names resonate with and impress so many outside the faith - there are so few of them. Alexander Fiske-Harrison shamelessly aligns himself with these few. The date was set for his fight to the death, 5 November, and the time. 'Enrique also decided that the fight should occur at five o' clock in the afternoon. This being the time mentioned in the refrain of the García Lorca poem every schoolboy in Spain knows so well.

*A las cinco de la tarde.
Eran las cinco en punto de la tarde.*

'At five in the afternoon.
It was at exactly five in the afternoon.'
'Of course, there was something more than a little ominous about that choice of time for, as the first verse ends:

*Lo demás era muerte y sólo muerte
a las cinco de la tarde.*

'The rest was death, and death alone
at five in the afternoon.'

The blunt horns alone, whether cut with bolt-cutters or by some other means, made this very, very unlikely.

Section 1 of this poem is certainly an artistic failure. The repetition 23 times of 'at five in the afternoon' is interminable rather than inexorable. An unsophisticated writer who protested 'at five in the afternoon! We get the point! Now get on with the poem!' would have a point.

Towards the end of the poem, the mono-culture of Andalucía, for such people as Lorca, is made clear in all its exhausted and parochial limitation: the bullfighter as the supreme representative of this society, or one of the supreme representatives, the inability to imagine far greater achievement in a different sphere, perhaps for all time:

*'It will be a long time, if ever, before there is born
an Andalusian so true, so rich in adventure'*

Alexander Fiske-Harrison's fixation on the alleged dangers to life of bullfighting becomes more and more wearisome. This is far from being only his fixation. It pervades the bullfighting world. He trains with a small calf (an animal less than a year old). Illustration 27 draws attention to 'the grim determination' on his face.

He goes to a bullring where his friend Padilla is due to fight. He

describes the way matadors get out of bed on the day of a bullfight. 'His focus at the time is completely on his forthcoming war with Death ...' The bullring is small. He sees Padilla's father, wife and daughter. 'It seems a strangely cosy place to risk your life with your family watching.'

Before a bullfight, the matador Cayetano looks at 'the flag of Spain fluttering above the ring.' Cayetano says, 'That! That is what I hate.' Not, we're quickly informed, the flag but the wind that makes it fly. Bullfighting is more dangerous when there's a wind. Cayetano says, 'The wind, that is what kills you.' This goes unchallenged by the author, of course. But no bullfighter has been killed in Spain since 1992, in all meteorological conditions. If the winds were strong or almost gale force, they made no difference.

In one of the later chapters of the book, the author is with a matador, Alfonso, due to fight the next day. He talks about members of his family. This becomes, 'Tomorrow he struggles with Death, so tonight he struggles with his life.' This would sound much less impressive is, 'Tomorrow, he struggles with the possibility that he may become the first fatality in the bullring since 1992, so tonight he struggles with his life.' If the death of the bulls is meant, this ought to have been made clear.

On the previous page, he reports his father standing up to the men who attempted a coup d'état in 1981. They fired into the air. His father sat with arms folded. 'How did he do that? He was never a soldier. How? Because when you have fought a bull, gunfire just becomes one more thing that can kill you. Just one more among many, and not the most terrifying at that.' Here, as well as the usual overestimation of the dangers of bullfighting, there's obviously an underestimation of gunfire.

A few pages later, on the day of the bullfight, 'In Adolfo's hotel room I join him in the strange silence of a man preparing for war.' The men about to land on the beaches on D-day against machine gun fire were preparing for war too, but with the odds not nearly so favourable.

In Chapter 15, he recounts a visit to an army base on Salisbury Plain. He arrives in the office of a lieutenant-general, where finds the office 'running at unusual speed to deal with the fact that a record number of British servicemen had died earlier that day in Afghanistan.' The main incident had killed five men at once and 'involved a secondary attack with improvised Explosive Devices (IEDS).' On the same page, '... what struck me most was the calm manner with which everyone - and I include the rank and file I met - dealt with the death of comrades and the risk of death to themselves. It contrasts a great deal with the way people talk about matadors, and sometimes the way matadors talk about themselves, even though no *torero* has died in the ring in Spain since 1992.' His book is a dramatic confirmation of this. He indulges in the flagrant exaggeration of danger again and again. The restraint of these soldiers is conspicuously lacking.

In my section The courage of the bullfighters above I compare the fatality rate of bullfighters and fatality rates in some other activities, and point out that bullfighting is much, much less dangerous than these activities. Alexander Fiske-Harrison records injuries to bullfighters, and here, his argument has apparently more substance. Bullfighters would seem to risk injury, sometimes severe injury. I maintain that accusations of 'cowardice' against them can't be sustained. But I also point out that the injuries sustained in modern warfare have been and are much more severe, very often.

There's evidence - not evidence which aficionados share with those outside their circle, for obvious reasons - that most of the injuries in the bullring are due to recklessness or negligence. An 'aficionado', Andrew Moore, writing for 'La Divisa,' published by the Club Taurino of London, provides a perspective in his piece 'José Tomás in Madrid' which was intended to be read by bullfighting supporters but which has obvious importance for bullfighting opponents. He relates some criticisms made of this bullfighter, including his "excessive" daring ... the ragged, unorthodox kills. This is not what *toreo* is all about, they are saying, reminding us that Pedro Romero killed over 2,000 bulls without ever getting scratched, and that Marcial Lalanda always said that, "good *toreros* don't get gored". The information is given that José Tomás earned 720 000 euros for his two performances in Madrid.

Avoiding injury isn't completely within the control of the bullfighter, but avoiding recklessness reduces the risk a great deal.

In Chapter 6, the author gives a graphic description of the scars left on the body of Padilla, a bullfighter who has suffered severe injury more than any other in modern times. He has been severely injured since the book was published. This is a reckless bullfighter by any standards, as this account from 'Into the Arena' makes clear:

'At one point, when the bull refuses to charge, he approaches it and leans down asking it why. He leans his head between the points of the two semi-circular horn arcs and asks again. The crowd holds its breath. Then, with a flash, he head-butts the bull between the eyes and steps back to receive the inevitable charge. The applause is loud, but even louder when he does it a second time.' Anyone who shows this degree of recklessness, who head-butts a bull, has only himself to blame if he gets hurt. On this occasion, he isn't.

At the end of the chapter, Padilla is described as a 'showman' and 'a man who fits the old Roman description of what makes a great gladiator ...' Many of the arguments for bullfighting are also arguments for gladiator-fighting. Both activities, despite the differences, are morally beyond the pale, I claim.

In Chapter 13, it becomes even clearer that if bullfighters are injured, it may well be due to their own flaws. Padilla follows the bullfighter José Tomás, and is aware that he's regarded as a far

bullfighter José Torres, and is aware that he is regarded as a far less accomplished bullfighter, so he tries to compensate. 'Padilla went into the ring to impress, and doing so, and in contrast to the images of Tomás still replaying in my mind's eye, he came across as reckless and artless. He brought the bull so close to his body that it was constantly buffeting him ... Every audience member seemed to be thinking the same thing simultaneously: 'Padilla, we forgot about Padilla! And he took his revenge on our nerves, forcing us to the edge of our seats with his ludicrously dangerous caping, staring up at the crowd rather than at the bull with accusing eyes, the jilted lover standing at the cliff's edge.'

For such reasons as these, the dangers of bullfighting have to be put into context, a context concealed by the bullfighting apologists who have a vested interest in exaggerating them and making them part of the bullfighting mythology but unwittingly revealed here by the author.

The only strength to have emerged so far at this early stage in the book is a strength, a comparative strength, which has nothing to do with the ethics of bullfighting, the rendering of sights and sounds. These descriptive powers have nothing to do with the ethics of bullfighting. A moral case isn't won if one side has superior skills in writing. As for Alexander Fiske-Harrison's skills, he's obviously a stylist, although not a stylist with any noticeable individuality. 'As Fandi's sun-blinded eyes stared into the darkness he heard the distant protest of heavy steel bolts sliding into their housings, followed by muffled shouting and the hollow sound of unshod hooves skittering on concrete. Then came the dull crash of horns against steel. The sounds repeated closer as further doors were opened, followed by more crashes. Then, from within the darkness, came a rearing, jolting black head, eyes focused, nostrils flaring, ears forward, a foot and a half of horns tapering to fine points above it. And behind it came a half-ton of pulsing muscle propelling it at a steady twenty-five miles an hour.'

The set-piece is over very quickly and gives way to some trite observations, trite observations disguised as penetrating observations and trite observations which are undisguised. He writes, 'A final word about El Fandi. It turns out he was indeed unusually good. The next day the national newspaper ABC said of that fight: 'El Fandi saved the honour of Seville.' Any city of this size which regards its reputation as bound up with one activity to the exclusion of all others must have a fragile self-confidence and very limited horizons - to say nothing of the worse than disreputable activity it embraces. This is a variant of the Lorca error, of course - the deluded belief that bullfighting is uniquely important. After quoting the newspaper, Alexander Fiske-Harrison concludes his Prologue: 'There was a lot I didn't know back then.' Some things never change.

Chapter 1 contains samples of high-flown language, and of the basic, simple-minded language. After the killing of one bull: 'I turn to Tanis [an aficionado] and say, 'Cojones.' He has balls.' 'Cojones' is what I call a 'cliché word' (not all clichés are phrases). After this not so interesting observation, there's bathos. Tanis replies, 'Si, mi amigo, pero no dos, cuatro.' Translation: 'Yes, my friend, but not two, four.' Presumably the bravest bullfighter who ever lived had, or does have, an even larger number of balls - eight, sixteen, thirty-two or whatever.

In some later chapters, Alexander Fiske-Harrison's enthusiasm for bullfighting is tested by events he witnessed in the bullring. His reaction is disturbing. Anyone who thinks that there is any Acceptable Face of Bullfighting should consider his reaction and reconsider. The post of Acceptable Face of Bullfighting is now vacant again, and can't be filled. Alexander Fiske-Harrison reverted to type.

'Not only did this "matador" ... have to go in three times with the killing sword, but then, when the bull was clearly insufficiently wounded for death, his use of the *descabello* sword to sever the spinal cord was execrable. I lost count of the number of times he stabbed the poor animal - twenty, thirty? [the critic from *El Mundo* counted seventeen] - by then its neck began to resemble a dish you might serve on a plate ... when it finally died, I asked my girlfriend if she wanted to leave, but now, her perspective on bullfights changed for ever, she felt she had a duty to see it through.'

He makes a comment about the need for matadors to be regulated, for withdrawal of their position as matadors to be possible, but in the meantime, with any such regulation far off, if it ever happens at all, with stabbings at the spine of the bull with a sword embedded in its back commonplace, if not usually so many stabbings, with all the hideous cruelty inflicted by the most prominent bullfighters at the most prominent bullrings and the hideous cruelty inflicted by the amateurish - or amateur - bullfighters at the small arenas, he continued to attend bullfights and he continues to oppose the abolition of bullfighting. He seems oblivious of the fact that any system of regulation would have to prohibit people such as himself from attempting to kill a bull.

He describes the reaction of a woman, Geri, who 'had been a regular attendee at bullfights in her youth.' After an operation, 'she contracted 'the flesh-eating bug' of newspaper horror stories. She survived, but says that to now see the bull with the sword in its back, as the *banderilleros* flash their capes in front of it to make it turn so that the blade will sever a major blood vessel within and hasten its death, was now almost unbearable for her.' This is a moral advance which Alexander Fiske-Harrison feels unable to follow in this book.

In various places, I draw attention to the linkage between the depraved world of the Roman amphitheatre - the gladiators and the killing of animals - and the depraved world of the bullfight. At one bullfight he attended, the bull gained the approval of the crowd. 'First of all one or two white handkerchiefs came out, then it spread throughout the crowd

...
 'They are asking for an *indulto*, they want the bull to be pardoned.' [The author's photographer.]

At this point Fandi let his *muleta* drop down by his side and the bull, only two feet away, duly stopped its charging, its focus remaining on the limp cloth. Then he looked up at the president in exactly the same manner as thousands of gladiators had looked up to Caesar over the still living form of a defeated opponent, and waited to see if he would be condemned to death or spared.

The mob [the author's name for the bullfighting audience, himself included, but a suitable one] bayed for mercy, the matador indicated he followed their opinion with a small gesture of his hand and an inclination of his head, but the president merely rolled his fingers, giving the universal gesture of 'carry on'. Carry on and we shall see. The bull was eventually spared, but this was no more a demonstration of the humanity of bullfighting than the sparing of some gladiators as a demonstration of the humanity of gladiator-fighting.

The author records the monotony or mediocrity of most bullfighting, the cruelty of bullfighting, but claims that a few, a very few bullfights are transcendental (not his word.) But these are workings of 'the same poem' (the phrase he uses), not the endlessly varied forms of authentic art, and they are examples of cruelty, like all the monotonous and mediocre bullfights. David McNaughton, in his book concerned with ethics 'Moral Vision' (1988), written from the perspective of particularist moral realism, gives arguments which are surely very cogent, or decisive, against the limitations of classical utilitarianism: pleasure as a nonmoral aspect which is taken to have moral relevance. The example he gives is of a government considering reintroducing public executions. 'If reactions to public hangings in the past are anything to go by, a lot of people may enjoy the spectacle. Does that constitute a reason for reintroduction? Is the fact that people would enjoy it a reason for its being right? It would be perfectly possible to take just the opposite view. The fact that spectators might get a sadistic thrill from the brutal spectacle could be thought to constitute an objection to reintroduction. Whether the fact that an action causes pleasure is a reason for or against doing it is not something that can be settled in isolation from other features of the action. It is only when we know the context in which the pleasure will occur that we are in a position to judge.'

The pleasure which people derive from the brutal spectacle of bullfighting has to be examined in the same way. The pleasure doesn't authenticate, make legitimate, the spectacle. The same argument applies to all the ecstatic reactions to the bullfight which are claimed to go beyond simple pleasure. These reactions too have to be examined in the context of the action, the bullfight. See also the examples I give in the section 'Bullfighting as an art form,' beginning with my discussion of a comment made by Nietzsche in Thus Spake Zarathustra. Even if it could be shown that bullfighters faced an enormous risk of death every time they entered the ring, and this isn't the case at all, courage wouldn't authenticate, make legitimate the spectacle. The truth of Christianity isn't established by the courage of the Christian martyrs. Nazism isn't converted from a bad cause to a good cause because enormous numbers of German soldiers and civilians showed enormous courage in promoting and defending Nazism.

An appreciation of Neil White, an academic in the field of computer science who had died recently, included this: 'One perhaps surprising sporting interest of Neil's was his love-affair with bull fighting. Of course, as a Guardian-reading left-wing socialist he was against bull fighting on principle, but as a scientist he knew he should see at least one fight before condemning it out of hand. He went only to have a Damascene conversion. It changed his life. In order to keep up with the latest bull fighting news, not much carried in the sporting pages of the UK national papers, Neil determined to learn Spanish. In one year he passed his GCSE and the following year his A Level in Spanish.'

This will seem very impressive, decisive not just to supporters of bullfighting but evidence in favour of bullfighting to many uncommitted people. In fact, it's not in the least impressive or decisive.

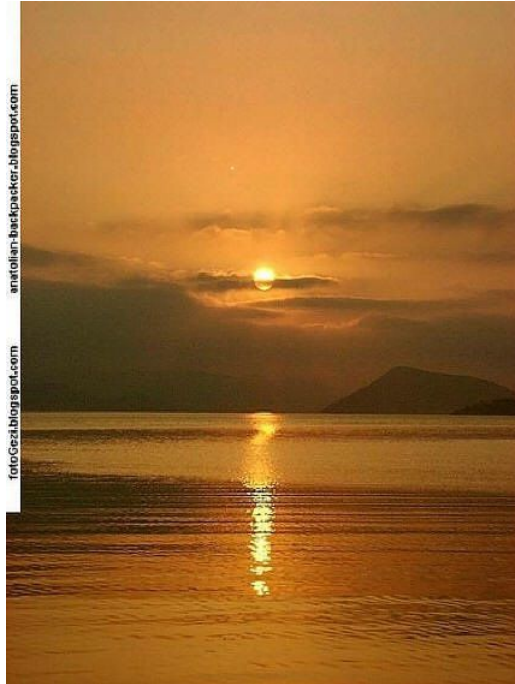
'Damascene conversion' is a reference to the conversion to Christianity of Paul, the future St Paul, on the road to Damascus. St Paul developed a theology of justification to faith as opposed to justification by works. According to a theology of justification by works, good deeds could allow a person to enter heaven. According to St Paul, good deeds (such as a life devoted to relieving suffering) were irrelevant. Only faith in Christ counted. Anyone who has reservations about Christianity or who opposes Christianity, many Christians who reject Pauline theology, including justification by faith, will be unimpressed by this Damascene conversion. Just because Paul had his intense experience, his 'Damascene conversion' we have no obligation to accept his views.

Bullfighting supporters have experienced momentous de-conversions. The Colombian bullfighter El Pilarico turned against bullfighting as decisively as Neil White turned in favour of bullfighting, for example. A conversion and a de-conversion have to be examined very carefully, from a variety of perspectives. I think that multiple perspectives very much favour the anti-bullfighting case. Someone 'converted' to bullfighting is likely to see things from the partial - the selfish - perspective of someone who feels a new form of pleasure and excitement. The perspective of the horses and bulls suffering in the bullring is likely to be overlooked.

In the twentieth century, many people accepted Communism with the passion of converts. The book 'The God that failed' records the disillusionment of ex-Communists, de-converted

Communists.

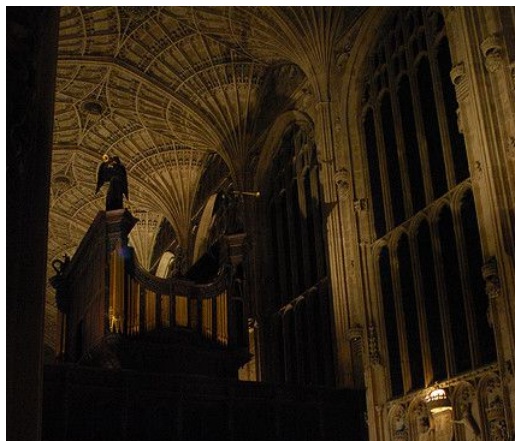
Alexander Fiske-Harrison ignores, at least in this book, all the transcendental experiences outside bullfighting which involve no cruelty. I think of the thrilling calm of a lake with a strong sun beginning to beat it into gold, the lake beginning to dissolve into darkness at dusk, the violence of the sea battering huge cliffs, a conflict more titanic than anything to be witnessed in the bullring, the sea as calm as a lake, seeming to stretch not to the horizon but to infinity, the sea from sunrise to sunset and at night



Acknowledgments, photograph of the Aegean Sea:
 vorageAnatlia.tumblr.com's photostream (flickr)

the sea in great and authentic art: Homer's 'wind-dark' sea, Turner's wild seascapes - the power and the fury - the North Sea, the sea of the sea interludes in Britten's 'Peter Grimes,' and as sombre and perplexing as Peter Grimes himself, the Great Bear and Pleiades shining above this sea, the calm sea conveyed with transcendental beauty in 'Soave sia il vento' in Mozart's 'Cosi fan Tutte' as two of the lovers set sail, an opera which is ambiguous, elusive, enigmatic, subtle, rendering an astonishing range of human experience and far more complex than any bullfight, the mastery of orchestral colour in this as in Mozart's other great operas - the muted violins in thirds, the bassoons climbing from their lower register in Soave sia il vento' (David Cairns writes of 'the smooth, mellifluous sonority of clarinets, horns, muted violins, and women's voices entwined in long, lingering phrases full of half-suppressed longing in 'Mozart and his Operas'), the transcendental technique of this and Mozart's other great works and all the other works of developed artistry of other artists, of a completely different order from the technique of any bullfighter, books which may or may not be about the sea but which reflect Kafka's 'a book must be the axe for the frozen sea within us.'

To quarry stone, transport it, shape it, lift it and produce a work of architectural art such as the fan vaulting of King's College Chapel, Cambridge - and the other stonework of the chapel - and the wood carving of the massive screen, and the stained glass windows - obviously requires technique of a very high order, completely eclipsing any bullfighting technique. Although images of the chapel interior are very familiar, I include one below, as a further reminder of the incomparable richness of the world beyond bullfighting, including the incomparable richness of performing art, such as musical performance, as well as non-performed art. The image shows both.





Acknowledgments: Vocalessence (Flickr)

To attend to one thing so many others must be neglected. People who ignore or loathe the bullfight aren't unfortunates cut off from the possibility of transcendental experience. I mention just two other sources of deep satisfaction, and sometimes of transcendental experience, for me. One is watching the swifts during the summer months, their swooping flight and moving cries, high overhead or dramatically close, shooting by, lower than the rooftops. These are birds which fly all their lives, except when they are nesting and feeding their young, mating on the wing and sleeping on the wing. The other is the experience of growing, which will be clear from two of the pages of the gardening section of this site, Photographs 1 and Photographs 2.

I've never had the money to travel extensively and frequently. I've no envy of people taking long-haul flights for pleasure year after year, several times a year. I've travelled far more than Thoreau, who remained close to Concord, Massachusetts, except for one visit to Canada, but his rapt observations of nature and landscape, including the lake he has made famous, Walden, are incomparable. From his essay 'Walking, on what he saw not in the summer months or the time of the brilliant autumn foliage but when the trees were leafless, in the unpromising month of November:'

'We had a remarkable sunset one day last November. I was walking in a meadow, the source of a small brook, when the sun at last, just before setting, after a cold, gray day, reached a clear stratum in the horizon, and the softest, brightest morning sunlight fell on the dry grass and on the stems of the trees in the opposite horizon and on the leaves of the shrub oaks on the hillside, while our shadows stretched long over the meadow eastward, as if we were the only motes in its beams. It was such a light as we could not have imagined a moment before, and the air also was so warm and serene that nothing was wanting to make a paradise of that meadow. When we reflected that this was not a solitary phenomenon, never to happen again, but that it would happen forever and ever, an infinite number of evenings, and cheer and reassure the latest child that walked there, it was more glorious still.'

Authentic art offers more than transcendental experiences, of course, but a range of experiences and a range of insights vastly wider than anything available at a bullfight, evading no aspect of human experience - harshness, ugliness, the everyday, desolate urban life, streets and commerce and factories as well as sunsets lighting up unspoiled countryside or the Aegean. It would obviously be completely impossible to list them, to do the least justice to them. I simply mention the spare and unsparing insights into human life of Samuel Beckett, in such novels as 'Malone Dies,' and provide this image, of Van Gogh's 'Two women in the Moor,' of work, of bent backs. Van Gogh lived at Arles for a time. Arles can be proud that Van Gogh chose to live there, if not in the least proud of its ignominious status as one of the main centres of bullfighting in Southern France. Van Gogh was, of course, an artist of the utmost seriousness, but there have been innumerable serious painters and other serious artists since his time with serious themes - more evidence that Lorca's description of bullfighting as 'the last serious thing in the world' (quoted with approval by Alexander Fiske-Harrison) is a travesty.



Acknowledgments: Creative Commons BY-SA license

These images of nature, architecture and painting, and the examples I give, are no more than reminders, of course - other people can come up with reminders of their own - of the world beyond bullfighting. The wider world can seem distant when one

is within its narrow confines, even if only, temporarily, as a reader of bullfighting works. Contact with a narrow religious sect might give rise to similar feelings, the need for similar simple reminders of the wider world beyond the sect. I know that Alexander Fiske-Harrison has wider cultural knowledge (I don't have any evidence of wider cultural interests, which is a different matter) but it's striking that in his book, they seem so distant. Nobody who had an adequate view of the world outside bullfighting could possibly repeat as he does, as if by rote, Lorca's rubbish about bullfighting being the last serious thing in the world, or the rubbish he perpetrates in other places.

Alexander Fiske-Harrison's parents went to see him kill a bull and attended one or more 'professional' bullfights before that. After watching Padrilla kill his bulls in the arena, together with his parents, he describes their reaction: 'We walk back to the hotel and my parents are excited and alive [unlike the bull, of course]; Padrilla's display has invigorated them ...'. His parents are wealthy. (His father founded Fiske plc, the stockbrokers.) They could afford the fees for Eton College, the exclusive school which Alexander Fiske-Harrison attended. If they like to travel, they can travel to many interesting and beautiful places, if they like fine wine, they can afford to buy it, if they like fine food, they can afford to eat in fine restaurants. There are so many other pleasures available to them, including ones that cost nothing at all, the riches of the world which are free. With such riches, why the need to see these killings? They should be ashamed. All over the world, villages, towns and cities have festivals and other events, small and low-key or large and ambitious, which can be a complete delight and which are untarnished by cruelty. Arles is the only bullfighting town I've ever visited, and all its obvious attractions were overshadowed for me by bullfighting. I travelled from there to Northern France and across the border to Belgium, setting up camp at Leper / Ypres. In the square in front of the cloth hall, there was an event taking place, or rather many small events, all of them unpretentious, not dramatic, but such a pleasure to watch - singing, Flemish street theatre, people in the costume of the area, and a band of pipers in Scottish highland dress - Flemish pipers! With, in the cafes around the square, wonderful Belgian beer.

Another example, the festivities at Hartland in Devon - not much more than farmers and other local people using their imagination to construct floats pulled by tractors and other scenes, but in its good humour and sense of occasion, like the event at Leper impressive as well as enjoyable.

The Munich Oktoberfest, the Carnival at Cologne and other German cities, opera performances in the Roman arena at Verona, are far bigger and more ambitious, of course, but are further evidence, if evidence is needed at all, that people who do without bullfighting aren't in the least reduced to an unsatisfactory state of existence. None of us are reduced to an unsatisfactory state of existence because we do without gladiator-fighting.

Alexander Fiske-Harrison's abilities as a stylist are evident throughout the book, sometimes intermittently, sometimes for long stretches - these have to be considered separately from what he's trying to express. It has to be acknowledged that bad causes sometimes have personable advocates, that bad causes may be supported by gifted organizers, notable intellectuals, good or great writers and artists, and other people of note. Bullfighters have to show courage, some, such as Jose Tomás, much greater courage than others (subject to the severe qualifications I make above), bullfighters have to show skill, some, such as Jose Tomás again, show much greater skill than others (but the levels of skill in many human activities are stratospherically high). Gladiator fighting (very different from bullfighting, but with too many linkages with bullfighting for comfort) called for courage and skill of a high order too. The fact that bullfighting demands courage and skill isn't a reason for condoning it, supporting it or failing to ban it. To return to Jose Tomás, the author agrees with the admirers, not with the detractors, and uses superlatives profusely in a long section on him. What would he answer if asked these questions: how does the best bullfighter, in your view and the view of many others, compare in importance, skill, courage, and other ways, with 'the best' in very different fields? The author's failures of perspective seem overwhelmingly obvious to me.

This film shows Jose Tomás in the third phase of the bullfight. It shows how long he takes to kill a bull; the cruelty of Jose Tomás. Even when he has killed a bull at once, then the death always follows multiple woundings: the cruelty of Jose Tomás. After running with the bulls, Alexander Fiske-Harrison attended a bullfight in Pamplona, vowing never to attend another there. It's cause for great regret and cause for moral condemnation of Alexander Fiske-Harrison that he didn't decide never to attend another bullfight anywhere. This is the most heartfelt and most sustained description of the plight of a bull in 'Into the Arena' by far:

'It was a strangely moving experience running side-by-side with a bull, close enough to touch, although I have been warned that that was frowned upon ... he was pure brown in colour and apparently totally ignorant of my existence at his flank, his whole being determined only to keep with his herd and get clear of this mass of humanity. The kinship I felt with him was purely physical, locomotory, experience, but it was still more than superficial.

'Later that evening I watched the one and only bullfight I will ever see in Pamplona. The party atmosphere from the streets was magnified in the ring. Not one, but six bands were in operation, each one from a different fan club celebrating. The fans themselves danced and shouted and swore and drank, half the time with their backs to the sand. The matadors valiantly tried to get their attention by fighting, but the bulls were so distracted by the noise - and being run through the streets that morning - that

they were almost impossible to make charge. It was an ugly, barbaric thing. And then the bull I had run beside came in, and although he was fought well, he refused to die, despite the sword being within him. As the crowd cheered and booed, swayed and screamed, he walked over to the planks and began a long slow march around the ring, holding on to life as though with some internal clenched fist, refusing to give up, refusing to die. I had run next to this great animal, had matched myself to him as best I could, and in doing so felt some form of connection to the powers that propelled him. Now I watched them all turned inwards in an attempt to defy the tiny, rigid ribbon of steel within his chest, and having been blinded by no beauty, tricked by no displays of courage or prowess by the matadors, I just saw an animal trying to stay on its feet against the insuperable reality of death. I left the *plaza de toros* with tears in my eyes after that. And there was nothing good in all that place.'

This is far from being the only instance of confusion in the book, but here the confusion is particularly acute: heartening and not in the least heartening at the same time. The plight of the animal is memorably shown, but at variance with this is the implied criticism of the crowd for disregarding the bullfight, for ignoring the matadors 'valiantly' trying to gain their attention, and the drawing of attention to the 'failure' of the bulls to charge. Worst of all, he overlooks that fact that the plight of Conséjote, the bull he fought, was the same as this bull at Pamplona - he too 'refused to die, despite the sword being within him,' the sword thrust in this case delivered by one Alexander Fiske-Harrison. He doesn't record whether or not the matador at Pamplona struck bone before thrusting the sword in deep, as Alexander Fiske-Harrison did, twice. His parents and the others who watched him can have seen 'no beauty ... or prowess' in this amateur bullfighter's performance, and as for 'displays of courage,' the young age, undersized development and blunt horns of the animal largely excluded any possibility of extraordinary displays of courage or anything very special. There was nothing good in the small arena where Alexander Fiske-Harrison gained the material for Chapter 20 of his book, entitled 'La Estocada,' (the killing sword, and the sword thrust made with it.)

For many or some of the people who attend the running of the bulls at Pamplona and the bullfights, it seems, the events are secondary, having a party primary. It may well be that bulls die in other places so that people can get out of the house, improve their social life, meet new friends, talk with old friends, have a focus in their life. There are many other interests which would serve just as well, without the devastating consequences. A few lines later, he starts a new chapter, travels from Pamplona to Ronda to watch more bullfighting, the tone quickly brisk and matter of fact, callously matter of fact. From this point on, he records practically no misgivings about bullfighting. Of the first bull of the bullfight in Ronda, '... when Manzanares goes in with the sword, I seem to see the bunched muscle of the shoulders actually preventing the blade from going in, catching the steel as though in a clenched fist. However, it does go in the second time and [unlike the majority of the bulls' deaths described in the book] the death is quick.'

'The crowd seem an eager bunch, silent when necessary, but generous with applause for good work. They demand an ear for the performance, but the president is more sober than they and ignores the appeal.' Another bull's death is dedicated 'to the *plaza* with style, and to roaring applause. The appreciative audience, without the boorishness of the Pamplona audience, gains his approval.

His descriptions are sometimes vivid, including his descriptions of the most harrowing scenes, the dialogue is often well done, but the omissions are glaringly obvious too. In the book, too much of importance is left unexamined. For one thing, he doesn't examine at all deeply this society which has welcomed him. He's sufficiently objective and independent to criticize individual bullfighters, including ones who have become his friends, but he doesn't examine at all deeply this society of Southern Spain. He describes his visits to bull breeding and bull rearing farms but no matter how well he describes his experiences, the perspective is a limited one. His account has to be supplemented, by an examination, for example, of the finances of these places.

The European Union gives the bull breeders and bull rearers something like 185 pounds per bull per year, 37 million pounds per year in total subsidies. The European Union pays for the renovation of bullrings as well.

The book is meant to be about bullfighting and is about bullfighting, but it suffers (but that may not be the best word to use in a book which gives so many instances of suffering) from a lack of context. These bullfighting supporters, or very many of them, are supporting not just the formal bullfight but a host of different informal events, the 'blood fiestas.'

FAACE: 'The vast majority of Blood Fiestas use cattle as their victims. Bulls, cows and calves from the bullfighting herds ...' In Spanish law, 'Blood fiestas with cattle are classified as bullfighting.'

A little information about the fiesta called the 'Toro de la Vega' in Tordesillas, North West of Madrid, will convey the context of cruelty and the context of finance.

The bull is driven by horsemen wielding spears from the town to a meadow. During the run, the horsemen are only allowed to wound the bull. It's only when the badly wounded animal reaches the meadow that it can be killed. The person who finally kills the bull cuts off the bull's testicles, impales them on the point of his spear and parades them through the town, which gives him a gold medal.

In an article in 'The Daily Mail,' an exceptional piece of investigative and humane journalism. Dannv Penman describes

the treatment of the bull which he witnessed:

'I watched as men on horseback tried to skewer it with their eight-foot long spears. Spear after spear sliced open his back. Once his strength began to ebb, the men became increasingly bold and moved in closer. This was the bit they clearly loved most of all - a time when they could begin to play with the bull without serious risk of injury to themselves.

'I watched as one horseman impaled the creature and twisted and turned his spear deeper and deeper into him. This seemed to fatally weaken the animal and he fell onto his front knees snorting and bellowing - his distress apparent. Within moments, several more spears had pierced his body.

...
 Marcos held aloft the blood-soaked bull's ears and bowed deeply to the crowd. Moments earlier he'd sliced them off the young bull, which now lay on one side, blood pooling beneath him. But the poor creature wasn't quite finished yet. In a pitiful act of defiance, he mustered just enough energy to raise his head a few inches off the ground ...

'Marcos responded by unsheathing a vicious-looking knife and stabbing him in the back of the neck a second time. The bull's head flopped back into the dust - he was finished ...'

Alexander Fiske-Harrison, like Giles Coren and others, gives very great prominence to one particular argument: that whatever the bull may suffer in the bullring, it's had a better life than factory farmed animals. The bulls repeatedly stabbed and killed in the bullring are the fortunate ones. He seems not to realize that beef cattle haven't been subjected to factory farming in the same way as pigs or chickens. In the United States, they often spend time in feedlots, but without the close confinement of very intensive farming.

The important point is this. Their argument would justify as well the cruelty of this event at Tordesillas, the argument that the bull has had a good life compared with factory-farmed animals and that this outweighs any cruelties in the killing. Do Giles Coren and Alexander Fiske-Harrison really believe that the bull repeatedly stabbed and killed at Tordesillas is one of the 'fortunate' bulls?

Alexander Fiske-Harrison writes of Conséjote, the bull he stabbed: 'Conséjote lived three years among his brothers, and died within their call, in the country where he belongs.' Just as much could be claimed of the bull speared at Tordesillas, and this bull lived for longer than three years. By Alexander Fiske-Harrison's arguments, this bull was even more fortunate than Conséjote.

Against this, it's essential to stress again and again this point, which I've already made above. Minimum standards for the care of domesticated animals which are eventually slaughtered are these:

- (1) Conditions as humane as possible during the animal's lifetime.
- (2) Every effort made to ensure humane slaughter, by comprehensive regulations governing slaughter and efforts to enforce regulations.

Bulls killed in the bullring, bulls killed during this and similar 'blood fiestas' have the advantage of (1) but not at all (2). Abolition of the blood fiesta at Tordesillas and the other blood fiestas is necessary and abolition of the bullfight is necessary.

The farm that bred this bull, Platanito, is called Finca Valdeolivas, Danny Penman reveals, and it's owned by the Gil family. Judging by the number of expensive cars and pick-up trucks parked in their driveway, they must be one of the richest families in the area.

'Finca Valdeolivas is in the heart of Spain's fighting bull country and it's clear the Gils are taking full advantage of it.'

...
 'I tried to talk to Don Miguel Ángel Gil Marín, head of the family that owns the finca, but he declined to answer my questions. I was, however, able to examine the EU's accounts and discover that Finca Valdeolivas received at least 139 000 pounds in subsidies last year.

...
 'The majority of the money flowing into Finca Valdeolivas is from the Common Agricultural Policy's Single Farm Payment scheme. This pays landowners a fee for managing the land, leaving them free to farm it in anyway they choose.'

In Britain, landowners have often used the scheme to abandon intensive farming practices. In Spain, many landowners have used the money in a similar way, but many have used it to rear animals for the bullring and the blood fiestas.

The picture of sturdy independence which Alexander Fiske-Hamilton implicitly conveys in his book is misleading. The reality is much more awkward and much less impressive, involving the receipt of handouts from the Common Agricultural Policy's Single Farm Payment scheme.

John McCormick wrote of the book on bullfighting by Kenneth Tynan, the theatre critic and bullfighting enthusiast, 'Although Kenneth Tynan's instincts are critical and aesthetic, in his book he was busy recording impressions rather than constructing arguments.'

This is certainly true of Alexander Fiske-Harrison. The arguments he does put forward are feeble. He studied philosophy in the course of his higher education and has been described as 'the bullfighter-philosopher' but this description is patent rubbish, on the evidence of this book. He refers to 'the slow construction of the philosophical edifice of how I made

peace with the idea of becoming a killer' but his reasoning is perfunctory and has nothing to do with philosophy. Anything less like a philosophical edifice is difficult to imagine.

He read Peter Singer's 'Animal Liberation' and Tom Regan's 'The Case for Animal Rights' and declares that 'the end point of all their arguments is an unavoidable one. If man has a moral duty to minimise the suffering of non-human animals in so far as he is capable, then there is no way in this scheme, in theory, to distinguish between domestic animals and wild ones. So our duty would include, for example, stopping lions from killing antelope in so far as we are capable.' Mark Rowlands disposed of this erroneous argument in his review.

This 'argument' is worse than feeble, practically moronic. Humanity has a general responsibility to domestic animals and a general responsibility not to inflict unnecessary suffering on wild animals, but no general responsibility to prevent the suffering of a wild animal caused by another wild animal. There are no responsibilities in cases where action is impossible, except for token gestures. Making these token gestures would be a ridiculous waste of time, energy and money. Are people with a concern for animal welfare expected to fly to an African country, equip ourselves with tranquillizing equipment and begin 'stopping lions from killing antelope in so far as we are capable,' or send money to people in Africa who can undertake the task on our behalf? All the world's resources would be completely insufficient to do more than make a start on such a grandiose and nonsensical project.

It seems logical to Alexander Fiske-Harrison that opponents of bullfighting should be opposing meat-eating instead, or as a greater priority. He seems to have no conception of concrete realities, of the choices to be made by people with an intense concern for animal welfare but with obvious (restriction): time, money and energy. Many opponents of bullfighting will also oppose meat-eating, but these people will realize that bullfighting and meat-eating pose vastly different challenges. Two areas of Spain have banned bullfighting, Catalonia and the Canary Islands. No areas of Spain have banned meat-eating, of course. Banning bullfighting in further areas of Spain is a difficult but achievable objective. Modest reductions in meat-eating and even significant reductions in meat-eating are an achievable objective, but not the banning of meat-eating. Opponents of bull-baiting and bear-baiting in this country in the early nineteenth century had an achievable objective, an objective which was won in 1835 with the abolition of bull-baiting and bear-baiting.

The principle that 'ought implies can' is relevant to these two matters, preventing killing by wild animals and preventing the slaughter of farm animals by humans. The principle is often ascribed to Kant. He never formulates it in these words, but it appears in less epigrammatic form in many of his writings, eg in 'The Critique of Pure Reason:' '... since they [principles of the possibility of experience] command that these actions [in conformity with moral precepts which could be encountered in the history of humankind] ought to happen, they must also be able to happen.' (A 807, The Cambridge Edition, Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood.) Lewis White Beck gives a list of occurrences in his 'A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason,' which includes: 'Critique of Practical Reason, 30 (118 - 19); Über den Gemeinspruch, VIII, 287; Vorlesungen über Metaphysik (Kowalewski ed.), p. 600. (Lewis White Beck op. cit. p. 200 n.) This is very much 'supplementary material,' obviously. I advocate symbolic representation in my page Introduction to {theme} theory and explain the symbolism which I use. The established symbolic representation of 'ought implies can' in deontic and imperative logic is this (I use / ... / to indicate that the possibility here is established logical possibility, not generalized possibility and that '→' is the established material conditional, / ... / constituting what I call a 'declaration, Dn):

$$/ O \underline{A} \rightarrow \diamond A /$$

O is a deontic operator which can be attached to imperatives, forming deontic wffs.

The generalized possibility which I use in {theme} theory includes the logical possibility here and also such instances as physical possibility and psychological possibility. {resolution}:- $\diamond \rightarrow / \diamond / + \dots$

Kant held that what we ought to do is not only logically possible but lies within our psychological and physical capabilities. Compare the formalized statements of other Laws (which, however, like Kant's law, are contentious), such as Hume's Law, on the non-deducibility of an 'ought' from an 'is.' (Stated in 'A Treatise of Human Nature,' Book III, Part 1, Section 1. Compare G E Moore and the 'naturalistic fallacy.') Hume's Law has wide applicability, including arguments to do with bullfighting. Banning bullfighting in Spain, although difficult, is certainly achievable. Jason Webster lives in Spain and has defended bullfighting. Some complimentary remarks about 'Into the Arena' are given on the back cover of the book (although this is a minor detail, Alexander Fiske-Harrison gives the mistaken information on the blog that the quotation is given on the front cover.) Even so, Jason Webster writes in an article entitled, 'Bullfighting - a slow death?' on his own blog (<http://www.jasonwebsterblog.com>):

'Interestingly the number of Spaniards watching bullfights has been declining steadily for the past ten years or more. The only thing that brought any change in that trend was the return to the ring in 2007 of José Tomás, regarded by many as the greatest matador of his generation - or perhaps ever.'

He asks, of bullfighting, ' ... could it disappear?' and gives this opinion:

'In part that process has already begun, but I find it hard to see it vanishing altogether. At least not for a while. This is a country that has a healthy disrespect for 'laws', so the more legal pressure is put on bullfighting, the more it will continue ... should the 'art' fall into decline, as it was in danger of doing quite recently, then bullfighting could well diminish until it becomes a side-show, a museum piece, perhaps kept going in a couple of cities for die-hards and tourists, but essentially dead in any real sense.'

Alexander Fiske-Harrison has no insights that I can detect into activism - or activism as I and many other people, I think, understand it. There are objectives which demand stamina, determination, with no end in sight, seemingly, objectives against opposition so powerful that the objective may seem unattainable in the near or distant future - but there has to be realism. No activist is going to take as an objective the abolition of killing of animals by other wild animals. He seems completely unaware of the importance of success in activism, the attaining, if not of the overall objective, of lesser objectives. Morale is as important in activism as in other human activities, and obviously benefits from successes, even partial ones.

My experience of working against the death penalty confirms me in this. Activists in this field can take heart from the many, many successes - country after country has abandoned use of the death penalty in law or practice. There are countries which are very difficult ones, and they include the United States. In the United States, Texas and some other states, to a lesser extent, offer extreme difficulties, but even in the United States, there are successes to report. To add to the states which have been abolitionist for a long time, there are others which have repealed the death penalty in the modern era of capital punishment: New Jersey in 2007, New Mexico in 2009 and Illinois in 2011.

I'm well aware that many, many people with a strong interest in animal welfare / animal rights are indifferent to the death penalty or support it. They can at least be thankful that reform of the criminal law hasn't been a matter of indifference to legislators in this country - otherwise, as I note on my page Animal welfare: arrest and activism there would presumably still be the death penalty for property offences, and members of the Animal Liberation Front who damaged laboratories, butchers' shops, slaughterhouses and other places might face public hanging. (By the end of the eighteenth century, there were 220 offences punishable by the death penalty in this country, most of them property offences.)

He makes a very candid comment in Chapter 17:

'I've already heard all the arguments in favour of the bullfight and they're usually bad, so I'd rather not hear people I like come up with them.' (It's surprising that his editor didn't save him from himself here, as in some other places. This quote can certainly be used by opponents of bullfighting.)

This doesn't stop him from adding more bad arguments himself. One of these dire arguments concerns the 'dehesas.' 'Dehesas,' according to a document he quotes, 'a European Commission environmental study on Mediterranean ecosystems' are 'typical ecosystems in western and south western parts of the Iberian Peninsula. They result from ancient methods of exploiting the landscape, which are well adapted to Mediterranean ecological conditions.'

The quoted extract which includes these words makes no mention of bulls, but he immediately claims, 'The harsh economic reality is that if the bullfight is banned, the breeders will have no choice but to convert their land to normal agricultural use or sell it to those who will.'

I haven't been able to find the document quoted here. None of the academic or other studies I've consulted mention bulls. This is a document which originates with a Spanish animal welfare organization which has relevance to the issue. It mentions the lack of reference to bulls and bull rearing in studies of the dehesas ecosystem and has great relevance to his claim. Anyone interested in this issue will obviously want to take account of a wide range of documentary evidence. I don't think that anyone who does take the time to study the matter in a fair-minded way is at all likely to conclude that bull breeding and bull rearing is vital to the continued existence of the dehesas. Even if it were otherwise, there would be advantages as well as disadvantages in allowing the change to something nearer to climax vegetation in this area. But these ecological arguments can only be decisive for people who lack an interest in the other dimensions of the issue, above all the ethical dimension. In his review of 'Into the Arena' in 'The Sunday Times,' Brian Schofield writes that bullfighting 'still has giant ethical questions to answer. Fiske-Harrison's responses to those questions never convince. His claim that banning the fight would mean the stunning dehesa (meadow) landscape of the breeding ranches

stunning dehesa (meadow) landscape of the breeding ranches "would be turned into farms for beef cattle" is just supposition (75% of Spain's dehesa is already being conserved without bulls), and his stance that taunting a bull to death is indistinguishable from eating a hamburger smacks of desperation.'

He argues in Chapter 8 that if bullfighting were abolished, the breeding ranches would be turned into farms for beef cattle and that 'bullfighting is actually better in terms of welfare' than rearing beef cattle, that replacing the bull-rearing farms with beef cattle rearing farms would lead to 'massively diminished animal welfare.'

It's obvious that if x million people in Spain are eating y kilograms of beef per year, supplied by beef cattle, then the abolition of bullfighting will do nothing to increase the amount of beef consumed. The beef cattle on the converted bull-rearing farms wouldn't be factory farmed. He gives the misleading and erroneous impression that factory farming is routinely used for the rearing of beef cattle.

There's not the least evidence that the vast majority of bullfighting supporters have any concern at all about the welfare of beef cattle. Bulls are killed in the bullring at an older age than beef cattle, but bullfighting supporters have no objection to the killing of bulls at a young age, either. Whilst bullfighters are training, before they ever kill these older bulls, they kill younger ones. The bull killed by the author was a year younger. Calves are killed in large numbers at the bullfighting schools. In Mexico, children are allowed to kill younger bulls not just in training but in the bullring. By the time Michelito Lagravère was 11, he had already killed 70 calves and young bulls.

The bullfighting areas of Europe and other countries aren't leaders in the field of farm animal welfare or any other aspects of animal welfare, of course, but areas where indifference to animal suffering is rampant - but the exceptions, the individuals and organizations anything but indifferent, are very heartening. He claims that animal welfare in the bullfighting areas would be severely compromised if bullfighting were banned. This is laughably wide of the mark. Without this public spectacle of animal abuse, it's far more likely that concern for animal welfare would increase in these areas.

Only a very few barbaric aspects of the blood fiestas and the formal bullfight have been abolished or moderated, all of them as a result of pressure from people outside the bullfighting world. Until a few years ago, blowpipes were used to attack a bull at Coria until the bull was covered with darts. The mayor of Coria has now banned the use of darts, after the protests of animal welfare campaigners - not, of course, the protests of aficionados with some humanitarian impulses. The protective mattress which has reduced, but not entirely eliminated, disembowelling of picadors' horses, owed nothing to the protests aficionados with humanitarian impulses either. Above, I discuss injuries to horses which the protective mattress doesn't stop and which it conceals. What regulations govern the killing of bulls in the bullring? Alexander Fiske-Harrison mentions only the Spanish law, under which the bull must be killed within 15 minutes of the matador going out to kill the bull in the third 'act' of the bullfight. Injuring the bull with repeated stab wounds, multiple blows with the sword, hacking at the spine 17 times, hacking at the spine 20 or 30 times, for that matter, isn't forbidden by the regulations. Compare the mass of regulations governing the slaughter of animals in the European community, and the real effort made to enforce the regulations. There are cases where the regulations haven't been enforced effectively, of course, but bullfighting supporters can't possibly claim to be taking the moral high ground here.

Alexander Fiske-Harrison refers to Jonathan Safran Foer's 'Eating Animals,' which gives instances of cruelty in slaughterhouses. These are American slaughterhouses, where conditions are generally worse than those in slaughterhouses of the European Union. but intensive efforts have been made to improve conditions in American slaughterhouses and to bring poorer slaughterhouses up to the standard of the best ones. There have been steady - or even dramatic - improvements.

Temple Grandin is one of the most important figures in America working to improve the standards of slaughterhouses. Jonathan Safran Foer remarks in his book that 'she has designed more than half the cattle slaughter facilities in the nation.' These are designed to minimize stress before slaughter and to make slaughter instantaneous. In her book 'Making Animals Happy,' she writes about taking visitors to the slaughterhouses which use equipment and the methods she has designed. 'They all expect the cattle to act crazy when they come off the trucks and they are amazed when the cattle stay calm ...'

Her site www.grandin.com contains a great deal of information on ways of avoiding stress to cattle and other animals and on humane slaughter, including this:

She gives data which show the extent of the improvements over the years. In 1996, the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) survey baseline before welfare audits started showed that only 89.5% of cattle on average were rendered insensible with a single shot of the stunning equipment. These would require a second shot, very soon after. In 1999, at the start of the audits, the figure was 96.2 % By 2003, after the slaughterhouses had been audited for some time, the figure had risen to 98.6%.
The improvement has continued:

'Thirty-two federally inspected beef plants and 25 pork plants were audited by third party auditing firms by two major restaurant companies. In 2010, all the plants rendered 100% of the animals insensible and passed the stunning audit. No willful acts of abuse were observed. Compared to 2009, this is a definite improvement.'

The challenge now is to bring other slaughterhouses up to the standard of these. The commitment being shown to making these improvements is immeasurably greater than the commitment being shown to make the bullring-slaughterhouses more humane. To be mathematically precise, the commitment to making them more humane is zero. Alexander Fiske-Harrison has shown no commitment whatsoever to making bullring-slaughterhouses more humane. Quite the opposite, by letting himself loose with a killing sword on a bull, an amateur in a field where killing by 'professionals' is routinely not in the least instantaneous. It's impossible to make them humane, of course, given that the killing takes place in uncontrolled conditions, and given the structure of the bullfight.

In the European Union, existing regulation will be improved in 2013. This document describes the improvements to existing regulations. Anyone convinced by the perfunctory treatment of the issue in 'Into the Arena' would do well to study the new slaughter regulations carefully.

The Postscript of 'Into the Arena' is assured in tone, with the conviction not just that bullfighting is good but that nobody should dispute that bullfighting is good, that nobody could dispute that bullfighting is good. If they do, he gives them a gentle reminder of their fallibility, as he sees it. So, he gently admonishes the former bullfighter El Pilarico, who killed 150 bulls in Colombia and Spain, until he broke his spine and turned decisively against bullfighting: 'And he became an animal rights protester for the same reason he became a bullfighter, because other people told him to.' A single isolated quotation is produced to make this clear beyond any doubt.

His own doubts about bullfighting may have caused a few ripples on the calm waters of his assurance in the past, but the surface is undisturbed now, it seems.

In the final paragraph, he writes, with quiet but unearned and spurious authority, 'I have given you everything you need in order to decide whether or not you want to see a bullfight, and hopefully something to help you understand a little better the glittering confusion of emotion and danger and gold that will unfold before you if you do.' The turbulent possibility of other responses, such as disgust or outrage, is not so much denied as never permitted to rise to the surface. He continues, as if with infinite, false wisdom, 'And if you do, and your heart goes out to the bull, as it should, let it also go out to the matador. For it is he who is your brother [as he has decided in his delusion] while the bull is not. Not unless you are in the ring itself where, it seems, the bull and the bullfighter are brothers.'

Carlos, a bullfighter quoted by John McCormick in his 'Bullfighting: art, technique and Spanish society' thinks of the bullfighter and the bull as 'friends' rather than 'brothers.'

'The torero and the toro are two friends, not 'enemies' as the critics always write in the newspapers, one of whom must leave the plaza dead' [concealing here the vast imbalance in the probabilities].

'The noble toro has bravura, enthusiasm for life, and his appearance in the ring is an explosion of happiness, of willingness to fight and to live.' But ... 'his instinct for his own death becomes increasingly apparent' until '... the magic moment when he says, in effect, to the matador, 'Mátame' - kill me.'

These musings of Alexander Fiske-Harrison and John McCormick are semi-sentimental or completely sentimental. They obviously liked the sound of the words. John McCormick's 'insights' into the inner life of a bull certainly go well beyond the findings of animal ethology concerning animal instincts and are obviously pure supposition.

If Alexander Fiske-Harrison wrote many more books about the subject, I wonder how many of the people who praised 'Into the Arena' would lose interest before he was far into the series, would quickly feel that this is a limited world, far from inexhaustible in its interest, far too monotonous and predictable, the variety of passes, for example, such as the Veronica (holding the cape up in front of the body with both hands) and the pase natural (moving the cape across the bullfighter's leading eye in a noseward direction) not varied enough, would feel that the curtain rising on a darkened stage to watch drama, opera or ballet gives the promise of greater enjoyment or more complex experience, comedy as well as tragedy, perhaps, or would feel that mountains, gardens, books, music, art and architecture, flowers and living creatures, the endlessly varied animals of the world, not just the bull, offer beauty, magnificence, an immeasurably greater variety of emotions and experiences than the bullfight, would realize that by concentrating attention on the bullfights, Alexander Fiske-Harrison has neglected almost everything that Spain has to offer. There's absolutely no reason to follow him in his obsession.

In Chapter 10, in another of his unwitting gifts to the anti-bullfighting cause, he writes, '... bullfights can actually be monotonous. Yes, there is the terrible poetry of death, but it's the same poem.'

Bad causes (of course there are degrees of badness, of an extreme kind) often have at least one more sympathetic character. Regimes which torture and execute their own people and others they can lay their hands on may have as their public face urbane and sophisticated types who disarm criticism fluently, even charmingly. Saddam Hussein had Tariq Aziz as the 'acceptable' face of mass massacre and other crimes. Colonel Gaddafi's son Saif al-Islam played a much lesser role, becoming prominent only in the closing stages of the Colonel's hold on power, but played a similar role. At least, he showed no obvious traces of derangement in front of the cameras. Even the Nazis had their less repulsive Nazis, in the view of some, such as those who spoke of the fact that he was at the head of the

as Hans Frank, despite the fact that he was at the head of the most extreme government of all the occupied countries.

William L. Shirer on Hans Frank in 'The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich:'

'Nimble-minded, energetic, well read not only in the law but in general literature, devoted to the arts and especially to music ... his intelligence and cultivation partly offset his primitive fanaticism and up to this time made him one of the least repulsive of the men around Hitler. But behind the civilized veneer of the man lay the cold killer. The forty-two-volume journal he kept of his life and works, which showed up at Nuremberg, was one of the most terrifying documents to come out of the dark Nazi world, portraying the author as an icy, efficient, ruthless, blood-thirsty man ... When once he heard that Neurath, the 'Protector' of Bohemia, had put up posters announcing the execution of seven Czech university students, Frank announced to a Nazi journalist, 'If I wished to order that one should hang up posters about every seven Poles shot, there would not be enough forests in Poland with which to make the paper for these posters.'

'Himmler and Heydrich were assigned by Hitler to liquidate the Jews. Frank's job, besides squeezing food and supplies and forced labour out of Poland, was to liquidate the intelligentsia ... Frank did not neglect the Jews ... His journal is full of his thoughts and accomplishments on the subject. On October 7, 1940, it records a speech he made that day to a Nazi assembly in Poland summing up his first year of effort.

'My dear Comrades! ... I could not eliminate all lice and Jews in only one year. [Public amused,' he notes down at this point.] But in the course of time, and if you help me, this end will be attained.'

Alexander Fiske-Harrison took objection to my mention of Nazism. His objections are made clear in this response which I submitted for posting on his blog, together with my reply to his objections:

'Alexander Fiske-Harrison's comment of 5 December 2011 amounts to gross misrepresentation and falsification but is easily explained – he read only a very little of my discussion of 'Into the Arena,' and what he did read was read with insufficient care. The material in question no longer appears at the beginning of my discussion of 'Into the Arena' but at the end, since I felt that there were more effective ways of opening the discussion.

'Alexander Fiske-Harrison writes [I quote his comments in full below], 'You actually **open** your discussion of my book by talking about me as the acceptable face of Nazism.' This, you feel, makes it unnecessary for you take anything I write subsequently with any seriousness. Your statement is completely unfounded. It is Hans Frank, who governed occupied Poland, not you at all, whom I name as one of the less repulsive Nazis 'in the view of some,' such as the historian William L. Shirer (not the view of myself.) This is what I write:

'Bad causes (of course there are degrees of badness, of an extreme kind) often have at least one more sympathetic character ... Even the Nazis had their less repulsive Nazis, in the view of some, such as Hans Frank, despite the fact that he was at the head of the most extreme government of all the occupied countries.

'Alexander Fiske-Harrison serves as the 'acceptable face' of the vastly different bad cause of bullfighting ('there are degrees of badness, of an extreme kind') to some people who are easily pleased. This is someone who concedes that there's a case against bullfighting.'

'Whenever possible in my discussion of 'Into the Arena' and the extensive page on bullfighting of which it forms a part, I attempt to provide context, which includes reminders that there are other issues besides bullfighting, some of which represent a far, far worse evil than bullfighting, such as Nazism. In the introduction, I write, '... action against bullfighting should be with some awareness of context, the context of preventable suffering, animal suffering, such as the suffering of factory-farmed animals, and human suffering.'

'There are very good reasons why writers on ethical issues should often cite Nazism. It represents, in the view of many, including myself, the worst evil of all. It's also one which is far more familiar to most readers than such evils as Stalinism. When I've argued against pacifism or against the demonization of Israel, and in other contexts, it has been natural to give evidence and arguments which concern the Nazi regime.

'Godwin's Law,' as you will surely recognize yourself, from your advanced study of scientific method, is no law at all. It's a fatuous and arbitrary rule, a product of what I call 'the mechanical mind.' It substitutes for free inquiry and responsible debate the mechanical detection of a word and a mechanical response: mechanically declaring an argument lost or declaring that an argument is at an end.

'I argue that Roman Catholicism, Nazism and bullfighting have linkages in one respect: they are very successful in their use of appearances to hide the reality of the bad cause, as I see it: attractive vestments, solemn ritual, often performed in surroundings of great beauty, hiding for many people the bleaker or more grotesque aspects of Roman Catholic dogma. Smart uniforms, massive, choreographed parades and all the other Nazi paraphernalia hiding for many people the disastrous and despicable ideology. The very striking costumes of the matadors, the parade before the bullfight, the spectacle of the bullfight hiding for many people its cruel reality. This isn't in the least to claim that Roman Catholics are Nazis or bullfighting supporters are Nazis. It's simply giving instances of the contrast between appearance and a reality, as I see it. In other respects, the

contrasts are extreme.

'You condescendingly call for 'a little more maturity' in myself, to benefit my thinking. Mark Rowlands, in his critical review of 'Into the Arena' in 'The Times Literary Supplement,' mentioned your use of ad hominem argument. You're using ad hominem argument yet again here.

'If this reply is deleted, like my questions to you concerning the blunt horns of the bull you fought and killed (I argued that blunt horns would make the fight far less dangerous to you), then at least I have the option of publishing this reply on my own Website.
It was deleted. Alexander Fiske-Harrison decided not to publish these objections to what he'd written or to defend what he'd written.

Within a short time, the page on his site which gave his misinterpretations was no longer available and an error message appeared: 'The page you are looking for no longer exists.' I was able to find a cached copy of the page and to preserve his comments, evidence of his slovenly and evasive approach to honest debate when it suits him. He wrote, 'Further to my previous remarks, I have actually read the part of your blog dedicated to me. [Not all personal Websites are 'blogs.' This site isn't a blog.]

'You seem to be completely unaware of Godwin's Law (the so-called reductio ad Hitlerum) which states that the longer an internet discussion goes on, the more likely someone is to draw an empty and unnecessary analogy with Nazism. It is generally accepted that at this point the debate has become null and void. You actually **open** your discussion of my book by talking about me as the acceptable face of Nazism. As such I don't feel the need to take anything you write subsequent to that seriously. [He feels no need to answer any difficult questions about the horns of the bull he fought, for example.] A little more maturity and sense of proportion would benefit your thinking greatly. AFH'

Alexander Fiske-Harrison's blog: The Anti-blog

This anti-bullfighting anti-blog is based on Alexander Fiske-Harrison's pro-bullfighting blog, begun in October 2008: <http://fiskeharrison.wordpress.com/> (The English version. In a few places there are comment on his blog in Spanish:

<http://laultimaarena.wordpress.com/>)

This anti-blog will contain only a small number of entries - enough to give some idea of his non-so-masterly use of the tactics of concealment, evasion and distortion and (for students of human nature) some idea of his vanity and conceit. Blogs, his included, give the most recent entries first. This anti-blog uses the reverse order. Alexander Fiske-Harrison's own words, and any quotations he gives, are shown like this. My comments are shown like this. Some entries referred to may have been removed from his blog. He's explained that he deletes some things 'for neatness.' I'd put it differently. He obviously realizes that some things are ridiculous and shouldn't be allowed to stay - but that leaves plenty of ridiculous material in situ. I've often updated the anti-blog by extending older entries as well as by adding new ones.

26.11.11

Alexander Fiske-Harrison is known as 'Xander' to his friends. To his girlfriend (now ex-girlfriend) Antalya Nall-Cain, ex-model trainee nutritional therapist elder daughter of Lord Brocket, Xander, amateur male model ex-trainee-bullfighter youngest son of Clive the Stockbroker is no ordinary man. He quotes the whole of Richard Kay's article in 'The Daily Mail' (published 29.08.11) with the title, 'Antalya hits the bull's eye.' It includes this (allegedly): 'He's terribly handsome, clever - and masculine. The article has some serious deficiencies. One is that it doesn't give a photo of the handsome 'bullfighter-philosopher,' only of his girlfriend AN-C. AF-H corrects the deficiency by providing a photograph of himself directly after the article, allowing readers to appreciate the accuracy of 'terribly handsome.' Another deficiency: according to Richard Kay, Antalya says, 'He's terribly handsome, clever - and macho' not 'He's terribly handsome, clever - and masculine.' Alexander Fiske-Harrison may have misquoted by accident, but this isn't at all likely. It's overwhelmingly likely that he posted this by cutting and pasting the 'Daily Mail' article. He gives the whole of the 'Daily Mail' piece and with identical wording, except for that replacement of 'macho' by 'masculine.' Perhaps he found the associations of 'macho' not too impressive, perhaps he felt that some rewording of the published quotation was called for. 'Macho:' 'manly' - fine - but 'domineering' 'over-assertive,' 'aggressive' and 'chauvinistic' - no, not at all. The article appears on his blog on the page News and Gossip. A link to the original Daily Mail article.

12.01.12

He gives a short list of achievements:

Alexander Fiske-Harrison. Master of Arts (Oxford), Master of Science (London), Matador de Novillos (Seville)

'Matador de novillos' means 'killer of young bulls.' He doesn't make it clear that by 'Seville' he's not referring to the 'Plaza de Toros de la Real Maestranza,' the large, well-known killing centre in Seville, but a completely different bullring, a small one attached to a ranch outside Seville.

This is one of the entries which has since been deleted. All the entries for January have been deleted, except for one. This represents a very high attrition rate. The exception is an admiring

represents a very high attendance rate. The exception is an upcoming book review and a comment from an admirer, a Dr Chris Blakey, who writes, 'As an [East] Oxford resident I have followed with much interest the debate in the local press following your postponed talk at Blackwells. I would very much like to offer you my support and let you know that not everyone is anti-bullfight. I am an aficionado of the corrida and am member of a Club Taurin in a small village in south west France. Every summer the village has a week long festival which now includes 3 corridas with mise à mort ... [which means putting to death, of the bull.]

His blog in Spanish has this beneath one of the publicity photos: Alexander Fiske-Harrison, M.A., M.Sc.

This is the only blog I've seen where the author's academic qualifications are put on display like this, just for the effect. *To mention some instances of Alexander Fiske-Harrison's vanity doesn't in the least amount to 'argumentum ad hominem,' the mistake of criticizing the person instead of addressing the arguments (a common practice of Alexander Fiske-Harrison according to the philosopher Mark Rowlands in his review of 'Into the Arena' in the 'Times Literary Supplement.')* On this page I give many, many arguments against such arguments as Alexander Fiske-Harrison uses. It's completely legitimate to mention some personal details as well as giving the arguments. In his 'History of Western Philosophy,' Bertrand Russell provides philosophical arguments in his chapter on Schopenhauer, but also personal information on some character flaws of Schopenhauer. In his book 'Parerga and Paralipomena,' Schopenhauer wrote with heartening and sometimes eloquent indignation against cruelty to animals in various places, but obviously defenders of animals can have character flaws. Schopenhauer's character flaws are minor in relation to his achievement in the history of philosophy and humane thought.

I regard argumentum ad hominem as an instance of {substitution}. See the section, 'The importance of evaluating the thing itself.'

The year before (13.09.11) he gave a talk at the Oxford and Cambridge Club. I don't know anything about the quality of the food served at this place, but if it's of a similar standard as the talk, it's inedible. This Oxford graduate, talking to an audience of Oxford and Cambridge alumni, serves up garbage - but the fact that the presentation was evidently prim and proper may have disguised it for most of the people present.

Now, I can - and have given - various relative defences of bullfighting to Anglo-Saxon audiences (in which loose tribe I count myself) ... 'Anglo-Saxons are apparently squeamish about bullfighting, but 'the British don't seem quite so squeamish about the brutal and real death of animals contained in the output of the BBC Natural History Unit.

The fact that lions kill and eat zebras becomes, according to his sub-mediocre standards of reasoning, a reason to accept a very wide range of human cruelties which isn't in the least 'squeamish' to want to end.

10.02.12

Matador Juan José Padilla returns to the ring ... and so do I. This marks a turning point in his blog. On the day before, he was scheduled to talk at Blackwell's bookshop in Oxford about his book 'Into the Arena.' The talk had been scheduled for an earlier time and date. These were changed, because, he alleged, animal rights activists had made threats, including death threats. He'd made a comparison between himself and Salman Rushdie. Later, he said that there had been a misunderstanding, that the threats had been exaggerated - these were the fault of the bookshop, according to him. In the section defending Freedom of Expression, I include Alexander Fiske-Harrison's freedom of expression in the defence.

The rescheduled talk was cancelled by Blackwell's. It was now an all-ticket event, but there had been hardly any demand for tickets. He blames the bookshop again, alleging that Blackwell's exaggeration of the level of threats must have deterred people. In the period leading up to the rescheduled talk, his attempts to distance himself from bullfighting were obvious. He was stressing the nuances and complexity of his attitude to bullfighting in 'Into the Arena.' As my discussion in the previous section shows, his approach to bullfighting in the book was never very complex and as the book progressed, he identified more and more closely with the bullfighting world.

After the talk was cancelled, he reverted to type. He's now stressing once again his identification with the bullfighting world:

I will be at Padilla's side in training on the ranch - my own return to the ring with cattle - and in the callejón - the bullfighter's alley - at the plaza de toros itself.

I think it's very likely that he expected a difficult time, a very difficult time, if the talk had gone ahead, not from extremists but from questioners, and that he was relieved when the talk was cancelled. I can't of course prove this. I'd reserved a ticket for the event, and I was set to travel from the North of England to Oxford to attend. I was informed that questions and debate

would follow the talk and I wanted to ask some very probing questions. I intended to ask him about the blunt horns of the bull he killed, to get an answer to the questions I'd already put to him by email, and which he'd refused to answer. I wanted very much to ask him a further question, along these lines: 'In your book 'Into the Arena' you acknowledge that bulls suffer in the bullring - but I'd say that you pay hardly any attention to the suffering of the horses - but you claim that the 'artistry' of bullfighters can justify the suffering. When you were preparing to fight and kill a bull yourself, you knew that the picador's lancing of the bull, and your killing of the bull couldn't be justified by any 'artistry.' You knew in advance that you just didn't have the experience to show any 'artistry' with the cape or in any other way. The fight confirmed that. There was no 'artistry.' You also knew in advance that again and again, professional bullfighters don't kill a bull with the sword quickly. It was very likely that your bull would die slowly. The fight confirmed that too. When you tried to kill the bull with the sword, you struck bone twice, then the sword was embedded in the bull. As the bull was still alive, you tried, with help, to get the bull to move this way and that so the sword would move and cut a vital organ. When this failed, the bull had its spine cut. Would you like to comment?'

13.02.12

He supplies captions for pictures from 'The Times.' The first one shows Juan Belmonte next to a bull he has just killed. According to Alexander Fiske-Harrison,

from 1914 to 1920 was bullfighting's Golden Age
I comment on this in the section Bullfighting's Golden Age. The context is harrowing - and astonishing. In this 'Golden Age' as many as 40 horses were disembowelled or otherwise killed - not during each bullfighting season in Spain but during each bullfight

14.02.12

The Man of the Moment: Juan José Padilla
He announces the matador's forthcoming return to the ring in Olivenza on March 4th, following his horrific injuries ...

This follows Padilla's loss of an eye after being injured by a bull. Padilla is a heroic, larger than life figure in the blog. 'Into the Arena' supplies this context:

'At one point, when the bull refuses to charge, he approaches it and leans down asking it why. He leans his head between the points of the two semi-circular horn arcs and asks again. The crowd holds its breath. Then, with a flash, he head-butts the bull between the eyes and steps back to receive the inevitable charge. The applause is loud, but even louder when he does it a second time.'

Is this heroism, or reckless stupidity?

And this (of a bullfight in which Padilla and Tomas both appeared):
'Padilla went into the ring to impress, and doing so, and in contrast to the images of Tomás still replaying in my mind's eye, he came across as reckless and artless. He brought the bull so close to his body that it was constantly buffeting him ... Every audience member seemed to be thinking the same thing simultaneously: 'Padilla, we forgot about Padilla! And he took his revenge on our nerves, forcing us to the edge of our seats with his ludicrously dangerous caping.'

He provides a photograph of Padilla with an eyepatch over the left eye. Not many days afterwards, the media show photographs of Marie Colvin, with a patch over the left eye. She had lost an eye in Sri Lanka in 2001, reporting on the conflict there, after being hit by shrapnel. Now, it was her death that was reported. She had been killed, with the French photojournalist Remi Ochlik, by Syrian army shellfire.

19.02.12

I will appear [sic] on BBC Radio Oxford for an hour this morning to discuss my book *Into The Arena: The World Of The Spanish Bullfight*. It begins at 10am, on Bill Heine's show ...

This was posted just before he was due to speak. Why he didn't give the information earlier, so that his many admirers and detractors had plenty of notice, is difficult to understand. He's a blogger but not in the least a tireless or even moderately conscientious one. Perhaps he's too busy practising bullfighting technique with one of those contraptions on wheels with bull's horns, or practising artistic cape-waving. I wouldn't know. Other people had been invited to speak as well. On the same side as Alexander Fiske-Harrison was someone introduced simply as 'David,' the secretary of the Club-Taurino of London. Very early on, Bill Heine made it clear that Alexander Fiske-Harrison had received no death threats from animal rights activists. If 'David' had requested minimum publicity - only the mention of his first name - to protect himself then this was ridiculous. His full name is David Penton, and he's in no danger of being lynched or otherwise harmed by animal rights activists. I can't guarantee that some of the people who know David Penton but don't know about this reclusive individual's life as an aficionado won't think less well of him once they find out.

The anti-bullfighting case was put by someone from the animal rights organization PETA, which is a liability as well as an asset. Its campaigning techniques are sometimes impressive, sometimes ludicrous and excessive and sometimes despicable. I can very easily give an example of ludicrousness and excess. The representative from PETA who appeared on the show was someone called - wait for it - Ms StopFortnumAndMasonFoieGrasCruelty.com

She wasn't introduced by this name but by her previous name, Abi Izzard.

From the section Three Spanish Restaurants:

'Abi Izzard of PETA changed her name officially to 'StopFortnumAndMasonFoieGrasCruelty.com' (changes to documents like her driving licence were necessary) to publicize the fact that the store Fortnum and Mason still sells foie gras.' I think she's probably had second thoughts about the wisdom of the existing name change, though, and now sees one obvious disadvantage: potentially, a lack of gravitas in certain situations, for example debate with a defender of bullfighting.

Abi Izzard, if I can call her by her previous name, wasted the opportunity. PETA, as an organization which opposes bullfighting, ought to have made certain that their representative was well informed and had read 'Into the Arena.' That ought to have been done at an early stage, soon after the book's publication. I don't know when she was invited to appear on the programme. Even if it was the day before, a Saturday, there was enough time to go out and buy the book and read the thing. She obviously hadn't read it. If she had, she would have had so much material to use against Alexander Fiske-Harrison's arguments.

That should be 'arguments.' I've demolished all the 'arguments' used by Alexander Fiske-Harrison in the radio programme in the material on this page. Presentation was at a much higher level. The arguments were presented with great fluency. It was quite something to hear him in full flow. This was the triumph of presentation over substance. The sophists of ancient Greece could make the worse case appear better. Alexander Fiske-Harrison can be regarded as a contemporary sophist.

One member of the public, a hunt saboteur and anti-bullfighting vegan, gave his opinion. This was quite a heartening contribution but it was far less substantial than it seemed: anti-bullfighting 'standard stuff.' It took no account at all of the approach used by Alexander Fiske-Harrison in 'Into the Arena' and consequently could do nothing to demonstrate its multiple flaws.

No moral argument can be demonstrated by citing public opinion polls. I don't make use of these surveys anywhere to establish a case. They can be useful in tactics - politicians are more likely to oppose bullfighting if they know that majority opinion doesn't favour bullfighting - but not to establish the case against bullfighting. Public opinion can be fickle and wrong-headed. The methodology of public opinion surveys is often suspect. It's a notorious fact that the phrasing of the questions can easily influence the results obtained.

Even if the methodology is as sound as it possibly can be, under the circumstances, it's a complete mistake to suppose that giving the public what they want is morally right. Opinion polls carried out in some Islamic countries by the 'Pew Global Attitude Project' gave these results for the statistical samples studied:

82% support in Egypt and Pakistan for stoning to death people who commit adultery.
84% support in Egypt for the death penalty for apostates (people who leave the Moslem religion.)
76% support in Pakistan for the death penalty for apostates.
54% support in Egypt for making segregation of men and women in the workplace the law.
85% support in Pakistan for making segregation of men and women in the workplace the law.

Both the anti-bullfight advocates quoted opinion polls which show that the majority of Spanish people either have no interest in the bullfight or oppose it. Again, this is helpful tactically, but not in the least helpful in arguing the case against bullfighting.

Alexander Fiske-Harrison is at his weakest in the realm of ideas - which is surprising, given his academic background, but not completely surprising. He didn't give the results of opinion polls but used arguments which had just as little relevance. He painted a vivid picture of Southern Spain, pointing out just how embedded in the life of Southern Spain were the bulls, and bullfighting. Again, the analogy from traditional Moslem belief is relevant here. An apologist for stoning to death for adultery, for punishing apostates with the death penalty and for segregation of men and women in the workplace could paint a vivid picture of a traditional Moslem society, in which these convictions are deeply embedded.
At least the presenter, Bill Heine (the author of 'Heinstein of the Airwaves') impressed.

20.02.12

Yesterday I spoke on BBC Radio Oxford with Bill Heine about my book *Into The Arena: The World Of The Spanish Bullfight*. The other guests were a hunt saboteur, a representative of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals - PETA - and the secretary of the Club Taurino of London - CTL.
(The hunt saboteur he mentions wasn't a 'guest' but, as I've explained previously, a member of the public who phoned to give his opinions.)

He then gives a link to the recording of the programme. That's all. No triumphalism, no comment of any kind. Recently, the entries on his blog have been far more terse than they used to be, in general.

22.02.12

I read this W. B. Yeats poem while walking in the library just now

An Irish Airman Foresees his Death

I know that I shall meet my fate
 Somewhere among the clouds above;
 Those that I fight I do not hate,
 Those that I guard I do not love;
 My country is Kiltartan Cross,
 My countrymen Kiltartan's poor,
 No likely end could bring them loss
 Or leave them happier than before.
 Nor law, nor duty bade me fight,
 Nor public men, nor cheering crowds,
 A lonely impulse of delight
 Drove to this tumult in the clouds;
 I balanced all, brought all to mind,
 The years to come seemed waste of breath,
 A waste of breath the years behind
 In balance with this life, this death.

I've a substantial interest in the poetry of Yeats, so I'm interested to find this poem on Alexander Fiske-Harrison's blog - but his reasons for including the poem are mysterious. He doesn't give any explanation. If he's implicitly claiming a linkage between Major Robert Gregory the pilot and himself, a bullfighter - both of them exposed to danger - then the claim is gross. The average life expectancy of a pilot in Italy at this stage in the war could probably be measured in months. Air combat here was less intense in general than over the Western Front, where life expectancy could be a matter of a few weeks, but these operations were still intensely dangerous. As I point out again and again, bullfighters - professional as well as amateur - are almost never killed by bulls.

Surprisingly, a critical comment from a reader, 'CarolinG,' passes the blog's selection process: 'Very profound [the poem, that is] - the difference being, those poor soldiers had a duty to fight, you on the other hand do not.' The decision to allow publication of this critical comment could have something to do with the admiring and heartfelt remarks which this same reader makes: 'You're too precious to lose, also one wants to read more of your magic on other subjects.' CarolineG seems actually to believe the self-serving romanticized myth-making, seems actually to believe that bullfighters can so easily be taken from them in the bullring and lost to the world.

Alexander Fiske-Harrison gives a comment in reply, none of it in the least illuminating, and including this: 'Major Robert Gregory was an Irish nationalist.' It would need a much longer comment for him to do the least justice to the issues. It would need a much longer comment from me to do the least justice to the issues. I've written on aspects of Irish and Northern Irish history and literature. See, for example, my concise examination of Irish nationalism on the page Ireland and Northern Ireland: distortions and illusions. Irish nationalism and the world of the aficionado have this in common. They are both accomplished purveyors of myths, seducing the susceptible, convincing them that the hideous episodes in their national histories aren't the truest expression of the harshness of reality but that bullfighting, or the history of Ireland, is the truest expression.

On one particular point of fact in this particular posting, Alexander Fiske-Harrison is mistaken. Despite anything he may have read on the Internet, Major Robert Gregory wasn't an Irish nationalist. From 'W B Yeats: A Life Volume II: The Arch-Poet 1915 - 1939' by R F Foster:

'By early 1918 feeling in Ireland was setting hard against the endless war; this would be sharply exacerbated by the government's move towards imposing conscription on Ireland in the autumn. Since the executions of 1916, opposition to the British war effort had spread widely even among political moderates, while the tone of nationalist propaganda was vitriolic. These feelings were not shared by Robert Gregory; his views had long been anti-Sinn Féin and he seems to have fully supported the war effort, joining the Royal Flying Corps with alacrity early in the war.'

In his Everyman edition of the poems, the editor, Daniel Albright, includes in his notes on the poem this quotation: 'Major Gregory [said] ... that the months since he joined the Army had been the happiest of his life. I think they brought him peace of mind, an escape from that shrinking as from his constant struggle to resist those other gifts that brought him ease and friendship. Leading his squadron in France or in Italy, [he was killed in Italy] mind and hand were at one, will and desire.' This is quoted by the editor Daniel Albright, who adds in his note to the poem, 'Yeats thought that Robert Gregory, whose paintings were full of subjective moodiness, had welcomed military service because the life of common action helped him to flee from his solitary world of reverie ... But in this poem his military mission seems less an escape from solitude than the epitome of it.' (Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats, vol. II, ed. John P. Frayne and Colton Johnson (1975), P. 431.)

Daniel Albright's notes are very detailed and informative in general, but not as useful as they could be in the case of this poem, despite the provision of this quotation. His annotation for Yeats's words 'Those that I fight' is 'the Germans, in Italy.' Robert Gregory was fighting against forces of Austria-Hungary. His

Gregory, the fighting against Robert Fiske-Harrison. The annotation for 'Those I guard' is 'the English, in whose army he fought.' This is the common blurring of 'England' and 'Britain.' At this time, Ireland was a constituent part of the United Kingdom. Robert Gregory was a member of the Royal Flying Corps, which was a part of the British army.

Marion Witt comments on the poem:

'So instantly palpable a poem seems to demand no exegesis; but the process by which it came into being and the elements united in it are extremely complex.' (Modern Philology, Vol. 48 No. 2)

01.03.12

On assignment for GQ magazine in Spain.
No other information given.

Mark Simpson, writing in 'The Independent' on GQ magazine and similar outlets: 'The promotion of metrosexuality [he introduced the word] was left to the men's style press, magazines such as The Face, GQ, Esquire, Arena and FHM, the new media which took off in the Eighties and is still growing.... They filled their magazines with images of narcissistic young men sporting fashionable clothes and accessories. And they persuaded other young men to study them with a mixture of envy and desire.'

Despite this, I wouldn't prejudge the finished article. It may even show Alexander Fiske-Harrison without a trace of narcissism.

02.03.12

Two matadors, one destination: Juan José Padilla & José María Manzanares

These two are due to appear at the same slaughter facility (at Olivenza) in a few days time. I've already discussed Padilla, the head-butted of bulls and described by Alexander Fiske-Harrison as 'the now one-eyed matador Juan José Padilla.'

José María Manzanares is described as Spain's current number one matador. Alexander Fiske-Harrison provides a photograph of the matador fighting - or 'testing' - a cow. If this sounds humdrum, no effort has been spared to make fighting a cow a whole new cow-fighting experience, the most glamorous cow-fighting experience ever. The matador is shown fighting the cow on the sand - not the sand of a bullring but the sand next to the great ocean.

I'd strongly recommend a visit to the slaughterman's own Website. This page

<http://www.josemariamanzanares.com/en/GaleriaSelect.aspx>

shows him fighting an animal in the ocean surf. Is this an unlikely place to be practising cow-fighting, or cow-testing? But of course, glamour photography demands glamorous locations and for this purpose the surf is better than the bullring of some unstylish ranch.

The same page shows the slaughterman relaxing whilst looking stylishly stern on a luxurious-looking bed.

Another page likely to be hilarious for people not too impressed by posing (except for the small photographs showing the bullfighter with a bull):

<http://www.josemariamanzanares.com/en/Galeria.aspx?is=7>

Another page gives information about José María Manzanares in the Special Men's Fashion edition of Hola Magazine.

Alexander Fiske-Harrison's attempts are completely eclipsed by these minor masterpieces of self-promotion. The objection could be made that José María Manzanares' Website lacks subtlety, perhaps, that it could even be accused of blatantly pandering to moronic style-obsessed people. I don't think in all honesty I could disagree with that criticism.

But there's realism too. Consider this answer to the question 'Recently you have been defending the Fiesta outside the bullrings.'

-Yes, that is the objective. To promote and protect. First we fought for the Fiesta to be managed by the Ministry of Culture, and now we want to concentrate on Barcelona.' The site isn't updated often enough. Barcelona (and the rest of Catalonia) was lost to the bullfighting cause some time ago, of course.

Alarm and defensiveness are spreading in the bullfighting world. What none of them seem able to do, Alexander Fiske-Harrison included, is to answer or even acknowledge the difficult questions. They won't be answered by fashion photography.

Another question and answer from the site - note the lack of contrast between the old Spain (bullfighting and the hold of the Roman Catholic Church) and the new Spain (bullfighting and the continuing hold of the Roman Catholic Church.)

Do you travel with a chapel?

-Yes, and it keeps growing. I can't reject any of the religious cards given to me.

And another:

-And during the winter you seclude yourself in the countryside with your team.

-The public see us in the bullring, and a bullfighter has an image of being a party animal, but the reality is that I spend the whole winter here in the countryside, and we don't go out

This is misinformation, surely, no doubt intended to foster the image of the dedicated artist. In fact, like so many other Spanish bullfighters, he spends some of the winter in Latin American bullfighting countries. This year, according to the 'Agenda' on his site, he was bullfighting in Mexico on February 5, then he went to fight in Colombia, then he was back in Mexico.

Also added to the blog today by Alexander Fiske-Harrison, a comment from a reader, 'Jenny' on a post from the previous month. Spelling and grammar as in the original. 'Sport' as in the original. Supporters of the corrida don't like to see it described as a mere 'sport.'

Juan José Padilla may just be the sexiest man I have ever see. I just read about him for the first time in my life today.

The passion he has for this sport can be literally seen in him. I think he is amazing and wish him the best in his next endeavour.

Which involves putting to the sword two animals tomorrow.

04.03.02

I have never before seen such valour. Juan José Padilla, with one eye, takes one ear from each bull. More soon. Still in the ring..

Compare and contrast events on October 8 of last year in the bullring in Zaragoza, where Padilla was injured and lost an eye: on that occasion, Padilla took no ears whilst the bull took one eye. In a fairer world, the bull would leave the ring alive and victorious, but this didn't happen, of course. The bull died, whilst Padilla didn't. This is the kind of combat in which one side has an almost guaranteed hope of success.

The published coments include this, from 'Maddalena84,'

So Brave ! So thrilling like he's twice the Guy... if that is possible. Amazeing! [sic] CHE TORERO!

and, for once, a hostile comment:

Valour, are you real. Mr Harrison? this excuse of a human being, is a cowardly sadist. Who enjoys torturing and killing bulls, who have the odds stacked against them, before entering the ring. He is in no danger, as his retarded helpers, in poncy clothes, all gang up on the bull if he is in any way threatened. Why do you give such timen and publicity to this evil scumbag? If something, yo should be protesting and calling for this barbarity to be banned. utterly sickened and shocked.

If Alexander Fiske-Harrison publishes any comment which clearly opposes bullfighting, it can be taken that he doesn't feel uncomfortable with it, that it poses no real threat to his views, that it's harmless, from his point of view. Anti-bullfighting activists would do well to give some thought to this military analogy: find out what the enemy very much wants and doesn't in the least want. If a tactical move gives the enemy just what he wants, then this is counter-productive. It can be assumed that Alexander Fiske-Harrison doesn't feel that this particular comment poses any sort of difficulty for him. The best arguments against Alexander Fiske-Harrison's views are likely to be the ones he can't answer and would never publish on his

blog. They have to be published on other sites.

Activists could gain a great deal by the study of 'The Art of War,' the ancient Chinese book attributed to Sun Tzu - a short and, despite the seriousness of its subject matter, an attractive book. It contains a wealth of insights, stressing such matters as the intelligent choice of tactics and psychological penetration: 'If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.' (Translation of Lionel Giles.)

Carl von Clausewitz, 'On War,' is a very different kind of book and far longer. Like 'The Art of War,' many of its insights can be applied to the choice of tactics in conflicts very different from military conflicts, such as conflicts between opponents of bullfighting and defenders of bullfighting. Obviously, it's impossible to give adequate coverage here, but I have in mind such sections as this (quoting only the title, my translation): 'Attack and defence are things of different kind and of unequal strength, so polarity cannot be applied to them.' (Chapter 1:16.)

www.clausewitz.com (an outstanding, very comprehensive site on Clausewitz and his seminal work, which includes the German text) The principal importance of Clausewitz's approach to strategic theory is its realism. By this we do not mean "Realism" in the terms of certain political science theories or of mere cynicism about politics and naked power, although the latter is not lacking in On War. Rather, Clausewitz's approach is profoundly realistic in that it describes the complex and uncertain manner in which real-world events unfold, taking into account both the frailties of human nature and the complexity of the physical and psychological world.'

Sun Tzu and von Clausewitz are alike in stressing human factors, such as morale. In sports, there's 'home advantage.' In bullfighting and many other conflicts, there's 'established advantage,' the advantage of having an established - or entrenched - place in certain societies, to which are added the advantages of having physical facilities in 'bricks and mortar,' and financial advantages, such as the grants of the European Union. There's evident lack of polarity here. Opponents of bullfighting don't have these advantages. I'm sure, however, that they do have the moral advantage - not an automatic assumption of moral superiority, but the outcome of moral argument and evidence. The moral advantage gives an advantage in morale, I believe. There's abundant evidence that the morale of bullfighting supporters has been significantly weakened.

I can't possibly do justice here to the subject of activist tactics and strategy and the linkages and (immense) contrasts with military tactics and strategy. Similarly with all the other topics I discuss on this page. Although it amounts to well over 60 000 words, this isn't nearly enough to make possible a detailed coverage.

To go back to the return of Padilla, I discuss the courage of the bullfighters above, in detail. It can't possibly be maintained that Padilla is a coward - confining attention only to physical courage. If he's in no danger in the ring, since his helpers 'gang up on the bull if he is in any way threatened,' how is it that he was injured at Zaragoza? But it is true that usually, or very often, the bull is drawn away with capes so that the immediate risk to a bullfighter is removed.

Alexander Fiske-Harrison's admiration for the 'valour' of Padilla is grotesque, ignoring all context and comparison.

Padilla had powerful financial reasons for going back into the bullring. If he took early retirement, he would lose his income. He had powerful personal reasons for going back into the bullring. If he took early retirement, he would be without the adulation and the prominence.

He shows courage, reckless stupidity and an obvious overwhelming feeling of inferiority. The feeling of inferiority explains the undeniable courage and the reckless stupidity. Alexander Fiske-Harrison gives the evidence in 'Into the Arena.'

In Chapter 13, he describes Padilla and Tomás in the

same bullfight. Amongst aficionados, Tomás ranks far higher and Padilla is vastly inferior. He writes,

'There is something awful in watching a friend twist his pride and his undeniably great courage into a single corrupted knot and risk his life out of something as small-minded as jealousy. Padilla went into the ring to impress, and in doing so, and in contrast to the images of Tomás still replaying in my mind's eye, he came across as reckless and artless ... there was no beauty in the movements, and there was only petty ugliness in the motives. Every audience member seemed to be thinking the same thing simultaneously: 'Padilla, we forgot about Padilla!'

In making his come-back at Olivenza, Padilla was showing not so much courage as a small-minded and corrupted urge not to be eclipsed.

Alexander Fiske-Harrison adds a comment of his own, which includes comment on courage. I've discussed this already. And this: As for tampering with the bulls, I was on the ranch a week before and photographed them extensively. The horns were identical in the ring ...'

It can be assumed that he's comfortable with the objector's comment, just as it can be assumed that he was very uncomfortable with the comment I submitted, in which I gave evidence that the bull he fought himself and killed had been tampered with. This is a matter in need of clarification. I hope he'll eventually provide it.

As for Padilla being awarded two ears - does Alexander Fiske-Harrison, do other bullfighting devotees, have any idea how primitive this sounds - how primitive it is? (sharkonline.org has a video which shows an ear being cut off a bull, named 'Bright Eyes,' which despite being stabbed in the spine is still alive.)

08.03.12

This photo is not what it seems

Alexander Fiske-Harrison discusses a photograph showing a bull with a sword half-embedded in its back and the matador sitting near it, in some sort of emotional state. He gives convincing evidence that this isn't the Colombian Alvaro Múnera Builes, who became an animal rights/welfare activist. 'Nor do I find it likely that the matador in the image is actually being affected by the dying bull at all, but is in fact making the sign of the cross as I have seen matadors do hundreds of times, thanking God that he is still alive as the bull dies.' The linkage between bullfighting and religiosity is very strong. This has plausibility.

He publishes a comment by Koleman Zander which puts him right on a number of things (Punctuation as in the original.)

there is nothing wrong with a sword at that depth. a media estocada, even a pinchazo profundo if accurately placed is no cause for shame. if it follows an excellent faena sophisticated audiences in sevilla or madrid will award ears. you read far too much into the photo. it is just as likely he is brushing sweat from his brow. the sword in this case is a bit caida but the matador's pose, seated on the estribo as the bull agonizes is a desplante and desplantes of this kind are usually reserved for a triumphant performance. after a failed faena he would be standing, surrounded by his cuadrilla as they seek to hasten the bulls death. you're a semi-famous taurine author, AFH. you should know this stuff.

He doesn't put him right on his moral state. Koleman Zander's assurance that there's nothing the matter with his own moral state either is fortified by the usual aficionado's reliance on technical information. Since the aficionado knows about such things and most anti-bullfighting writers don't then, he assumes the aficionado must be right about other aspects of bullfighting, such as its morality.

Alexander Fiske-Harrison concedes his mistake and adds this glimpse into this spectator activity in contemporary Europe, The bull looks to me to be doing the walk of death along the tablas, and I've hear that whistled many a time...

13.03.12

533 professional bullfighters killed in the ring since 1700.

I discuss this figure near the beginning of the section The courage of the bullfighters.

16.03.12

He gives a link to two very brief Youtube video on the return of Padilla to the bullring in Olivenza. A much longer video is available on Youtube, showing Padilla and other matadors in the ring at Olivenza. None of these show what happened to any of the bulls after any of the matadors stabbed the bull with the sword. It's obvious that the bulls weren't killed instantaneously, but how long the bulls took to die isn't recorded anywhere, to the best of my knowledge. One appreciative comment is recorded, from a bullfighting supporter called Kay Bryan. The Youtube comments on bullfight films are more often than not very different and there are large numbers of them - a healthy contempt for bullfighting and bullfighters, hatred for bullfighting and bullfighters, revulsion against the suffering and death of the bulls and the vile mistreatment of the horses.

Capote y Toros, 157 Old Brompton Road, London, SW5

... when a production company asked for a good venue in which to talk about bulls, this is where we ended up, under the photos of all the great matadors alive today from Curro Romero to Morante de la Puebla (its name is capote after all.)

While I was there, the restaurateur-aficionado Abel Lusa came along to say hello. He recently opened CyT and also owns the more formal tapas restaurant Tendido Cero across the road, and the justly famed Cambio de Tercio a few doors down, a favourite of the likes of Rafa Nadal when he's in town and most recently graced by the Duchess of Cambridge.

The section Three Spanish Restaurants gives further information about the aficionado Abel Lusa's business operations.

24.04.12

He discusses his talk at the University of Seville on 20 April 2012. Everyone who attended the talk later went to the bullring. He provides a photograph which shows himself and his father in the audience. He gives the information that his mother and girlfriend, Antalya Nall-Cain, were in the audience as well. A film of the bullfight (it lasts for nearly three hours) is available. Of all the visual records of a bullfight known to me, this film gives the most extensive coverage of the reactions of the audience to the events in the arena, including the applause when the bull has been stabbed with the banderillas and the sword. I haven't seen the whole film, and I've no intention of seeing the whole film, but in the parts I have seen, the bulls all die slowly. This is what so many of the people of Seville pay to see, then - the shame of Seville.

Anyone who not only feels that the scenes are exciting or interesting and that the excitement and interest also justify the continued existence of bullfighting could reflect on one thing, amongst others. The film shows the parade which takes place before the bullfight. It includes the picadors' horses. What fear must these horses feel? They will already have experienced terror in the bullring, even if they have not been injured, if they have been in the bullring before. The 'protective mattress' protects them only against puncture wounds (but not invariably) not injuries caused by the force of the bull, the bull's bulk. The reliance only on the pleasure of the onlooker or the experiences of the onlooker - an instance of what I call the *autocentric* view - is no substitute for moral questioning which involves a fuller ((survey)).

Some questions about the University of Seville and other Spanish universities. Alexander Fiske-Harrison,

like Lord Tristan Garel-Jones and so many other bullfighting supporters, are evidently in the grip of a *deficiency theory*. British and American culture and the culture of most countries are allegedly deficient because bullfights don't take place in these countries.

What about the deficiencies of Spain? Are Spanish universities, including the University of Seville, among the leading universities in the world, in scientific and technological research and the many branches of scholarship? Not at all. Every available measure of their success suggests otherwise. Even the best Spanish universities don't enjoy a high reputation when compared with the better British and American universities. (Without ever forgetting that a university can be undeservedly neglected and that there may be excellence in some areas, without attaining the wide excellence which registers highly in the rankings.) I wouldn't put too much emphasis on this point, but I think the next point is very significant -

Spanish universities, like most other universities, apart from specialized technological institutes, and so on, have departments of literature. It's recognized that the study of literature has more than enough complexity and importance to justify scholarly study. Some continental universities have departments of oenology, or wine and wine production, since wine has a very extensive subject matter. Does the University of Seville or any other Spanish university have a department of bullfighting studies, a department of the *corrida*? Does any Spanish university consider that bullfighting has the extensive subject matter, has the importance, to justify academic recognition and proper academic study of bullfighting and bullfighters, except incidentally, in sociological study, for instance?

04.05.12

I fully acknowledge that there are a fair few errors in my book, *Into The Arena: The World Of The Spanish Bullfight*, although it is a long way from having one on "nearly every page." There are several causes for those that there are, but no excuses ... the rush to publication and improper fact-checking by myself and my publishers.

Jock Richardson of the Club Taurino of London had accused Alexander Fiske-Harrison of poor standards of factual accuracy and a poor attitude to the *fiesta brava*, the *toros bravos* (although not of poor standards of moral reasoning.) I deal with this battle, or rather minor skirmish, in the section on the Club Taurino.

14.05.12

In the comments section, there's an exchange of views with the bullfighting supporter Matthew Clayfield, who writes, in connection with the use of *banderillas*, 'Interesting that your critique of the *banderillas* is both aesthetic and ethical ...' Alexander Fiske-Harrison responds, "Ethik und Aesthetik sind Eins" [Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same], proposition 6.421, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

I give a quotation below from the blog of Zachary Bos which comments on Alexander Fiske-Harrison's use of Wittgenstein's proposition in the '*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.' In this post, Alexander Fiske-Harrison quotes the original German correctly. When he used it in an earlier post, he misquoted, giving 'Ein' instead of 'Eins.'

Wittgenstein's claim is a general one, and subject to a very large number of difficulties and objections. It can't possibly be used to justify a particular act - to claim that an act which is beautiful is also ethical. The use of the claim in connection with the 'planting' of *banderillas* is philosophically inept, worse than inept. If the Romans had devised an 'artistic' method of 'placing' *banderillas* in the backs of victims to be executed in arenas like the Colosseum (used for executions as well as gladiatorial combats and the killing of wild animals), then the 'beauty' of the scene, for the spectators, would have {separation} from any ethical considerations.

The Wonder Reflex Blog of Zachary Bos isn't primarily an anti-bullfighting blog (it addresses a wide range of issues, with great intelligence) but it does include these comments on bullfighting, Alexander Fiske-Harrison and Wittgenstein's proposition: 'The first organized bull-based entertainments, in medieval Spain, were horrid affairs. Bulls were slathered in gunpowder and set on fire, drowned in water, and hurled to their deaths from the tops of cliffs. In nineteenth-century Seville, a city grown rich as the port of the Americas trade, young bourgeois men began to refine these peasant rites, and elaborated bullfighting as a three-act ritual. Its very form, Hardouin-Fugier notes, was designed to mirror public criminal executions, down to the period of time that the bull was secluded before the event.
-- Ben Wallace-Wells. in his review for *The New*

Republic of Elisabeth Hardouin-Fugier's Bullfighting: A Troubled History.

'In September 2008, Alexander Fiske-Harrison published in Prospect magazine a defense of bullfighting, in which he answered affirmatively the question he posed: can aesthetics justify the suffering of the animal? I and others took him to task in the now-disappeared comments thread at a now-defunct Prospect blogs site. I'm prepared to reiterate all of the arguments I published there, including a rejoinder to Fiske-Harrison's proposal that bullfighting be defended on the grounds that Wittgenstein wrote that "[e]thics and aesthetics are one," Ethik und Ästhetik sind Eins (Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, 1999 [1922]: 6.421). Put briefly, aesthetic arguments may not be given as constraints to ethical arguments, as the terms are different. Just as, we can analogize, weight in pounds cannot be used to describe height in inches. Wittgenstein's is a throw-away statement, quoted more often as aphorism than as principle. How beautiful must something be in order to justify the discomfort of the creator, the pain of the audience, or the injury or death of some participant? This kind of question might, really must, be asked of many calculations -- how much convenience is worth a poisoned ecosystem; how much profit is worth the exploitation of certain classes; how much comfort justifies our demure failure to challenge injustices and indignities. When I asked Fiske-Harrison where the pageantry of the bullfight begins to justify the suffering of the animal, he evaded any answer. That at least is honest; there can be no answer to such a question. Ethics and aesthetics are not one. Can there?'

The literature on Wittgenstein's proposition is extensive, as might be expected, for example Diané Collinson's article 'Ethics and Aesthetics are one' in the 'British Journal of Aesthetics,' Vol. 25, No. 3, Summer 1985.

14.05.12

After announcing to the readership of his blog that he has contributed to the T.V. programme

World's Scariest Animal Attacks: The Spanish Fighting Bull

This neatly coincides with my blog receiving its one hundred thousandth hit.

I forwarded a comment on the significance of 100 000 hits (I explain below why I chose to comment on this subject of 'hits,' one with no importance in assessing the moral objections to bullfighting.) The comment was published on his blog and he added some outspoken criticisms of me.

What does it feel like to be subjected to Alexander Fiske-Harrison's outspoken criticisms? All I can convey is my own personal experience. Let me say this to begin with: To be subjected to Alexander Fiske-Harrison's criticisms isn't very pleasant.

To dispel any impression that I was left trembling and shaking, I have to add straight away that to be subjected to his criticisms isn't mildly pleasant either, or very unpleasant or mildly unpleasant. The experience left no impression at all but a trace of mild surprise and incredulity (not very great surprise or incredulity, because I'm very familiar with his reactions). Can he *really* have thought he was putting forward 'devastating criticisms? If I'd been encountering for the first time in this comment section his claim that I'd classed him with the Nazis, I would have been incandescent with anger at the injustice of his remarks, but this wasn't the first time I'd read his monstrous-puerile claim, and I knew so much about his carelessness in reading, his casual interpretations.

World's Least Scary Aficionado Attacks: The Writer on Spanish Bullfighting Alexander Fiske-Harrison

To me, confining attention to this issue. Alexander Fiske-Harrison represents mimicry. Think of a picnic, and one of the people there terrified by a wasp, having been badly stung in the past. But no need to worry - this is a hoverfly, not a wasp. It looks like a wasp but it's harmless. If Alexander Fiske-Harrison seems to be a formidable opponent, he's no such thing. He's harmless.

Alexander Fiske-Harrison can write vividly about his personal experiences and he can talk very fluently, but this is a matter of style rather than substance. He addresses anti-bullfighting arguments more rarely than is often supposed, and when he does argue the case for bullfighting, he shows that he's no thinker in this field - not just harmless as a thinker but ridiculous as well, sometimes. Take this, for example, an argument of his which I discuss above. He writes,

'If man has a moral duty to minimise the suffering of non-human animals in so far as he is capable, then there is no way in this scheme, in theory, to distinguish between domestic animals and wild ones. So our duty would include, for example, stopping lions from killing antelope in so far as we are capable.'

Mark Rowlands disposed of this erroneous argument in his review in the 'Times Literary Supplement.' I add, 'This 'argument' is worse than feeble, practically moronic. Humanity has a general responsibility to domestic animals and a general responsibility not to inflict unnecessary suffering on wild animals, but no general responsibility to prevent the suffering of a wild animal caused by another wild animal. There are no responsibilities in cases where action is impossible, except for token gestures. Making these token gestures would be a ridiculous waste of time, energy and money. Are people with a concern for animal welfare expected to fly to an African country, equip ourselves with tranquillizing equipment and begin 'stopping lions from killing antelope in so far as we are capable,' or send money to people in Africa who can undertake the task on our behalf? All the world's resources would be completely insufficient to do more than make a start on such a grandiose and nonsensical project.'

If I put forward a comment for his approval, I thought it very, very unlikely that there would be such a thing as a 'meeting of minds,' 'constructive dialogue,' any possibility of scholarly - but robust-exchange of argument. I decided that I might as well write about a peripheral matter, Web statistics, 'hits' on his blog, since he seemed completely unwilling to debate more central matters, but I did draw to his attention the existence of this anti-blog. In general, his criticisms are answered by reference to the guiding principles I've attempted to follow on this page: attention to detail, attention to significant contrasts, avoiding the blurring of significant contrasts, fuller discussion and analysis rather than emphasis on very short but potentially misleading statements.

Although Web statistics are peripheral here, the distinctions between the numbers of hits, number of visits, number of visitors and number of page views is central to the interpretation of Web Statistics, and for very good reasons. To call the number of page views the 'hits' abandons some of these distinctions.

I'd already explained to Alexander Fiske-Harrison why it was completely mistaken to suppose that I'd ever referred to him as a Nazi. I oppose completely irresponsible use of this word - as in 'feminazi' or 'fashion Nazis,' any use of 'Nazi' as a general term of dislike or disapproval. A full discussion of the matter can be found in my review of 'Into the Arena' on this page.

Alexander Fiske-Harrison writes,

the man with such a paucity of historical references that he has to fall back on the Nazis.

Before I explain my views on the importance of context, including historical context, I make it clear that Alexander Fiske-Harrison can't possibly have read with any care. If he had, he would have found not a shortage of historical references but a wide range of historical references - to the Napoleonic Wars, including the French retreat from Moscow, the Spanish Civil War, the American Civil War, the First World War, the history of Irish nationalism, the industrial history of this country, and the history of Rome: the Colosseum and the gladiatorial games.

A few quotations from this page:

The Spanish Civil War: 'Paul Preston is the foremost British historian of the Spanish civil war. His books include *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain*, which documents the slaughter and torture of those years. He estimates that at least 130 000 people were executed by the nationalists during the war but the total is likely to have been much higher. He estimates that just under 50 000 people were killed by the Republicans. Compare the attention given to the 533 bullfighters killed in the ring since 1700 by Alexander Fiske-Harrison. When the town of Badajoz was captured by the nationalists on August 14, 1936, the prisoners were confined in the bullring. Hundreds were killed in the executions which began that night. Soon, as many as 4 000 people were killed.' I cite the Spanish Civil War in various other places, in connection with the poet, dramatist and aficionado Lorca.

The American Civil War: 'Between 1863 and 1869, no deaths are recorded for matadors. During the American Civil War in just one prison (Salisbury, North Carolina) during a four month period (October 1864 - February 1865) 3,708 prisoners died out of a total of about 11 000. (Information from the 'Civil War Gazette'.) This is about a 33% mortality rate. If a similar mortality rate applied to bullfighting, then in one single bullfighting season in Spain there would be markedly more bullfighters killed than have been killed in three centuries of bullfighting.

The industrial history of this country: My poem *Mines* is about child-labour in coal mines. It mentions the rock falls and explosions which have caused so many deaths and injuries, but there were other ways of dying horribly, such as drowning when the mine workings were flooded, or a fall to the bottom of the mine shaft when the cage fell uncontrollably. A very few statistics (for single incidents, not the total for the year) from an enormously long list: the 439 deaths at Senghenydd in Wales in 1913, the 290 deaths at Cilfynydd, the 388 deaths not far from here, near Barnsley in Yorkshire in 1866, and the 1 549 miners killed at Benxihu in China in 1942.

As for injuries, in mining as in bullfighting so much more numerous than the fatalities, it isn't obvious in the least that a horn wound in the leg is worse than the crushing of legs by a rock fall. And there's a very significant difference. An injured bull fighter is taken out of the bull-ring in a minute or two and is immediately treated in the bull-ring infirmary. The crushed coal miner had, and still has, no such benefit. Even with modern equipment, reaching the miner after a rock fall may be very difficult and may take days, or may be impossible. A severely injured high-altitude mountaineer also faces a prolonged and agonizing wait for rescue and medical treatment, if rescue and

medical treatment are practicable at all.

'A L Kennedy, on bullfighting plazas: '...all first-class plazas have fully equipped and staffed operating theatres standing ready, next to the ring.'

This Anti-blog contains a discussion of Irish nationalism during the First World War, prompted by Alexander Fiske-Harrison's quoting and discussion of a poem by Yeats.

My page Ireland and Northern Ireland: distortions and illusions - and many other pages on this site - doesn't have a 'paucity of historical references' either. These are the headings for the separate sections, after the Introduction: The Troubles (that is, the period of terrorist activity involving the IRA, other republican organizations and loyalist organizations, The Second World War, 1916, The Great Famine, The rebellion of 1798, the Vendée and Napoleon, The earlier period. There's a great deal about the time of the Troubles on this site - I lived in Northern Ireland when terrorist action was at its most intense. The bombing and bloodshed left an indelible impression on my mind.

I write on this anti-bullfighting page,

'Whenever possible in my discussion of 'Into the Arena' and the extensive page on bullfighting of which it forms a part, I attempt to provide context, which includes reminders that there are other issues besides bullfighting, some of which represent a far, far worse evil than bullfighting, such as Nazism. In the introduction, I write, '... action against bullfighting should be with some awareness of context, the context of preventable suffering, animal suffering, such as the suffering of factory-farmed animals, and human suffering.'

'There are very good reasons why writers on ethical issues should often cite Nazism. It represents, in the view of many, including myself, the worst evil of all. It's also one which is far more familiar to most readers than such evils as Stalinism. When I've argued against pacifism or against the demonization of Israel, and in other contexts, it has been natural to give evidence and arguments which concern the Nazi regime.'

He now uses the word 'obliquely' in connection with his completely unjustifiable claim. I didn't compare him with Nazis directly or obliquely.

I drew his attention to this passage quite a time ago.

After making claims for the courage of bullfighters, he adds this, However, almost anything pales in comparison, though, to extreme military valour, such as - for example - my cousins at several degrees of remove, the Goughs, who were awarded three Victoria Crosses in two generations.

He establishes a distant link with military courage - 'cousins at several degrees of remove' - but misrepresents the situation. It's important not to compare 'extreme military valour' with 'almost anything' but to compare 'everyday' military valour with the courage needed in bullfighting. Millions of men and women in the Second World War, and in earlier and later conflicts, and not just the ones who won medals, faced a far, far greater risk of death than Alexander Fiske-Harrison facing his bull with blunt horns, Jose Tomas facing his bulls with sharp horns, and all the other bullfighters - often carried 'on shoulders' through the 'puerte grande' of the bullring, in the traditional diseased spectacle of mass adulation. The soldiers who approached the Normandy coast in their landing craft on D-day, about to face intense fire, just got on with it, and in general resumed their quiet lives.

Here's a short film, lasting a little over half a minute, which shows the adulation of the bullfighting audience. The matador carried through the gates of the bullring is El Juli and the bullring is Las Ventas, Madrid.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vTer-BIIHD4>

He writes,

As for comments - something which I note you lack the courage to allow on your own "website", (I use inverted commas as, since it is clearly being constantly updated to mirror this blog, it is actually a blog)

I've every reason for believing that withstanding the collective comments of defenders of bullfighting would be akin to withstanding a shambling group of vague-minded innocents armed with rolled up newspapers and would require no courage at all. I believe I've more than adequate supplies of ammunition - evidence and arguments - to hold my own. The dealings I've had with aficionados and other defenders of bullfighting, my communications with them, give me every confidence.

Anyone who has the patience to read the comments from supporters of bullfighting on Alexander Fiske-Harrison's blog will, I submit, find reasons for thinking that these supporters have only modest resources as opponents, that they aren't in the least opponents to be reckoned with. This comment, from Barbara Ritchie, an aficionado and member of the Club Taurino of London (she may be an ex-member by now, after her differences with Jock Richardson of the same club) is below the average standard, but even the 'best' comments are nothing special at all. She writes,

'And what's this about cricket J.R. p.44) ????????? (never, to my knowledge EVER to have mentioned it, I am mystified).' From the section on Lord Tristan Garel-Jones: 'I've drawn the attention of many individual bullfighting supporters and bullfighting organizations to this material and received replies - the most common responses amount to 'I'll see what I can do,' - but silence has followed. Not one defence of bullfighting against these arguments.'

I've every reason for believing that if I implemented a comments facility, there would be far more comments from supporters (and opponents of bullfighting) than people who oppose me

(supporters of bullfighting.) Although I regard this page as an outline of the issues rather than a very detailed treatment, there's sufficient detail, the issues are discussed at sufficient length, to deter very quick reading. There are many people who lack the time or the inclination to read even discussions of modest length. Very brief comments might well attract attention, such as, to give a hypothetical example, 'I agree with everything you say, the bullfighter is a coward, who tortures bulls to death.' In my discussion, I'm careful to distinguish the danger of death from the danger of injury in the bullring, and to make it clear that in view of the danger of injury - although this is very much increased by the recklessness and stupidity of bullfighters, motivated in large part by their wish to enhance their own reputations - it isn't reasonable to suppose that bullfighters are cowards. It would be impossible to add to this page the lengthy comments which I think are needed in general to do justice to the issues. If I make it as easy as possible to find comments which are critical of me or this page, hostile to me and this page, I don't see what cause there is for complaint. In the past, I've not been the least bit perturbed when a circus worker said that he'd break every bone in my body (at a demonstration against the use of animals in a circus), and I'm sure that the collective outrage of aficionados would cause me not the least worry.

The useful distinction (a useful starting point at least in classifying material on the internet) between a Website and a blog is another one which Alexander Fiske-Harrison erodes. There can be hybrid forms but it should be obvious to anyone examining the other pages of this site, or at least some of them, is that this is a personal Website, not a blog. There's only one page with any blog-like features, the Anti-Blog on this page, and most of the content isn't in the form characteristic of a blog.

Blogs, such as Wordpress blogs, come with a comments facility which is part of a blog. The writer doesn't have to set up a comments facility. The creator of a Website has to implement a facility such as the one provided by Disqus. Alexander Fiske-Harrison has a Website as well as his blog on bullfighting (there's also a blog concerned with his play 'The Pendulum.' (the blog concerned with the play is a good one, honest and informative.) The Website [www dot intothearena dot co dot uk](http://www.dotintothearena dot co dot uk) doesn't have any facility for comments! It doesn't have any contact information of any kind. Anyone wanting to email Alexander Fiske-Harrison to comment on the information is out of luck. There's no contact information of any kind for his blog concerned with 'The Pendulum.' [http:// thependulumplay dot wordpress dot com](http://thependulumplay dot wordpress dot com)

His blog on bullfighting does have a comments facility, but no email address. An email address, which I provide on virtually every page, is very important for forwarding comments. - otherwise, a person can only submit a comment to be published. He has stated that comments will be published, provided they are 'civil.'

My policy has never been so restrictive. I've been publishing comments critical of me for a long time, whether civil or not. Take this example, which had its origin in an issue to do with bullfighting. It was published in a newspaper: 'You've met Mr Hurt's type: not thick exactly, just a bit impervious to nuance, a bit cognitively impaired, like Sarah Palin maybe.' I didn't respond with anger, I didn't attempt to vilify the writer. I sent the journalist a courteous email, providing him with my home phone number and suggested that if he wanted to talk about the matter then he was welcome to phone me. (My phone number is in the Sheffield directory, for people who prefer to contact me in that way.) I didn't demand an apology from the journalist and he didn't give one, but that didn't stop me from praising him and quoting from some of his writing. We've had a friendly exchange of emails since then. The quotation can be found on this page, in the section Freedom of Expression. If Alexander Fiske-Harrison cares to look, he'll find quite a number of choice insults directed at me which I quote in this site, such as 'dickhead' and 'phillistine.' My response to criticism is varied, not invariable. If I respect the writer, then I'll respond amiably. If I don't, then I may write in very forceful terms - but this isn't possible, or desirable, in every case. It would be impossible to find the time. The comment may simply be ignored.

I consider Alexander Fiske-Harrison a very petulant opponent - I do have to consider him an opponent - and not an opponent I respect in general. (But I respect his talents as a literary stylist, if not a stylist of great individuality, and even to some extent his flair in speaking, his fluency - but this is a matter of style rather than substance.)

He writes,

I publish, change and delete posts for my own reasons, for which I offer no explanation or apology. If I do not "conform" to the behaviour you expect of a blogger then all I can say is "good."

It's his blog, and he can do what he likes with it. Nothing on this site contradicts that idea. In the same way, this is my site, and I'm entitled to make a policy and follow it. But he published a completely different policy - that 'civil' comments would be published. Soon after, I submitted a 'civil' comment, including a polite question about the horns of the bull he killed, and it was deleted.

In my anti-bullfighting blog I mention the fact that he accused me of being a liar, accused me of making up a quote and very quickly deleted all reference to these accusations. It was contemptible weakness for him not to publish a retraction, to hide his error in this way.

He writes,

I mean, over 180 mentions of my name in what would be, were it

printed as a book, about 180 pages is just weird. There are sections on this page with comments on various 'defenders of bullfighting.' It will come as no surprise that in the section concerned with A L Kennedy I mention A L Kennedy's name often. In the section concerned with Lord Tristan Garel-Jones I have cause to mention his name often. Alexander Fiske-Harrison (I hope I'll be excused for mentioning his name again) has two sections, longer than the ones for other people. This is understandable. It can be claimed that he's the most prominent present-day defender of bullfighting in the English-speaking world (which isn't in the least a compliment, to me.) If he welcomes the prominence, he has to expect more frequent mentions, greater scrutiny, the possibility of more frequent criticism. As they say, 'If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.'

I've written far more about the poet Seamus Heaney than about bullfighting (and Alexander Fiske-Harrison) and I've had cause to mention Seamus Heaney's name far more often than his. It isn't 'weird' to mention Seamus Heaney's name in discussions of the poet and his poetry. I've mentioned the names 'Rilke' and 'Kafka' very often in my page on Rilke and Kafka, the name 'Nietzsche' very often in my page on Nietzsche and the name 'Jared Carter' very often in my page on Jared Carter's poetry. Further examples would be superfluous, I'm sure.

His comments don't do justice to the issues even remotely. To mention just one issue, I hope that he will be able to find the time to comment on this claim I make above:

'In the Prologue of 'Into the Arena' he writes of bullfighting, 'When it was done well, it seemed a good thing; when done badly it was an unmitigated sin.' On his blog, he gives great prominence to this: 'I can't think of many spectacles in the world which are evil when done badly but good when done well.' 'But he knew for certain that his own performance would be without 'artistry,' the people who came to watch him - nearly a hundred of them, including his parents - knew that it would be without artistry. In the Prologue, he writes of bullfighting, By this principle, he has to regard his own fight and killing as an 'unmitigated sin' or 'evil.'

A reader guided only by his comments would very likely gain a completely erroneous view of this site, and would suppose that it's a site with one aim, opposition to bullfighting, with an almost exclusive emphasis on Alexander Fiske-Harrison. This misconception would be dispelled very quickly by a glance at the Home Page and the Site Map (links provided at the top of this page).

I've no fixed intention to denigrate Alexander Fiske-Harrison at every opportunity. If I ever write about his play 'The Pendulum,' for instance, it will be uninfluenced by my opinion of his bullfighting writings, just as my review of A L Kennedy's novel 'Paradise' was uninfluenced by my critical review of her book 'On Bullfighting.' The complete review of 'On Bullfighting' (there are extracts on this page), the review of 'Paradise' and other works can be found on my page A L Kennedy. My review of 'Paradise' begins, A L Kennedy's 'Paradise' is an outstanding novel.' it includes this, 'Its insights are very often superb.' (I don't confine myself to generalities, of course.)

These are my comments on 'A L Kennedy in person' on the same review page. I quote the whole of the section:

'An evening with A L Kennedy,' an event at a literary festival I attended recently, was a complete delight. She's self-deprecating, almost self-effacing, but has very great presence, a very attractive presence, impressive in her professionalism, but with the enthusiasm of an amateur, seriousness conveyed with a light touch. For once, the person can give an enhanced appreciation of the writing - it's easier to appreciate the individuality, amounting to uniqueness, of the writing, after hearing her in person. I regretted more than ever her disastrous excursion into the world of the bullfight.'

I give this as evidence that if I find good reason for criticism, I criticize and if I find reason for praise, I praise. I obviously think that Alexander Fiske-Harrison's excursion into the world of the bullfight was disastrous too, but doesn't amount to anything like a general failure.

A major flaw of his book 'Into the Arena' is its failure to give context, its failure to make any use of the comparative approach in some crucial areas - occasionally, of course, not throughout. The repeated references to the dangers of the bullfight tend to give the impression that the danger of death in the bullfight is very high. Once context is given - and I do give context on this page, in some detail - then it's apparent that this isn't so. Here again, he ignores important distinctions. The danger of injury in the bullfight is appreciable, the danger of death in the ring is negligible. He ignores such important issues as 'contributory negligence,' such as the idiotic recklessness of Padilla.

He records on his blog his astonishment at the section in my review of 'Into the Arena' which concerns 'transcendental experiences outside bullfighting,' the section which includes images of the sea, an architectural masterpiece and a Van Gogh painting. There are various reasons why I included this section. Immediately after the section, I write, 'These images of nature, architecture and painting, and the examples I give, are no more than reminders, of course - other people can come up with reminders of their own - of the world beyond bullfighting. The wider world can seem distant when one is within its narrow confines, even if only, temporarily, as a reader of bullfighting works. Contact with a narrow religious sect might give rise to similar feelings, the need for similar simple reminders of the wider world beyond the sect.'

I write in the Introduction, 'So much writing in support of bullfighting is suffocating in its exclusion of the world beyond

bullfighting is surrounding it in its exclusion of the world beyond bullfighting. I see no reason why my anti-bullfighting page should follow this example. The supplementary material I include goes far beyond the limited world of bullfighting. For example, I give reminders of human courage and artistic achievement which owe nothing to bullfighting and discuss or mention natural beauty, wildlife, wildlife conservation and other topics.'

Just a paragraph or two, just a few lines, perhaps, would have left the book less vulnerable to criticism. I didn't expect him to write about sunsets over the sea, but I did expect to find some indication that he has some capability for aesthetic experience outside bullfighting.

Hemingway, the barbarian, had one thing in his favour: if his aesthetic awareness was deficient, and it was, it wasn't deficient in breadth. Alexander Fiske-Harrison is evidently offended by my pointing out the narrowness of 'Into the Arena,' although obviously I didn't expect him to write about the Aegean sea, one of the illustrative examples I used. He should read Chapter 20 of 'Death in the Afternoon,' which offers a striking contrast with the narrow focus of 'Into the Arena,' its impoverished aesthetics. Alexander Fiske-Harrison decided to write a book for publication about bullfighting and some aspects of its world and decided to do just that, no more, or not much more. Chapter 20 of 'Death in the Afternoon' begins 'If I could have made this enough of a book it would have had everything in it.' This is obviously impossible, but what he does include is striking in itself and striking in its contrast with Alexander Fiske-Harrison's parsimonious procedure. Hemingway gives a wealth of scenes and sights, experiences and insights with nothing to do with bullfighting which he thinks should be in a book about bullfighting.

In this book - on bullfighting - 'There ought to be ... the chestnut woods on the high hills, the green country and the rivers, the red dust, the small shade beside the dry rivers and the white, baked clay hills; cool walking under palms in the old city on the cliff above the sea, cool in the evening with the breeze; mosquitoes at night, but in the morning the water clear and the sand white; then sitting in the hazy twilight at Miro's; vines as far as you can see, cut by the hedges and the road; the railroad and the sea with pebbly beach and tall papyrus grass.'

But it's impossible to do justice to the riches of the world, to do more than sample them, that is, for people who don't live lives of the utmost privation. (Anyone with the leisure and the means to afford a ticket to a bullfight is one of this more privileged group.) To concentrate on some experiences is to neglect others. People who live without watching bullfights aren't deprived - to suppose otherwise is to accept what I call the *deficiency theory*. Alexander Fiske-Harrison's narrowness, his avoidance of the comparative approach, doesn't succeed in suppressing the obvious questions.

A L Kennedy, in her book 'On Bullfighting' and Hemingway, in 'Death in the Afternoon,' do use the comparative approach, do attempt to give context, to put bullfighting's artistic claims in context, to compare bullfighting with other artistic activity. In each case, it amounts to only a few lines, but it makes a substantial difference. A L Kennedy writes,

'The corrida can sometimes create the effect of art (as can, for that matter, a voodoo ceremony, a funeral or a high mass) but it is divided against itself, because of the unpredictability of the bull, because of the numerous abuses of its own laws, because it hopes to weaken the bull, but leave it glorious, to defend the matador, but give him something to overcome. The corrida, although it has its own rigours and remarkable individual toreros, currently lacks the overarching discipline, creative economy and communicative breadth of an art. It could also be said that its levels of cruelty and violence prevent it being an art, that an art cannot exceed certain parameters of damage, that it cannot cause death.'

This comment of Hemingway's is very brief but very significant: 'If it were permanent it could be one of the major arts, but it is not and so it finishes with whoever makes it.'

The nearest that Alexander Fiske-Harrison comes to providing context in this regard is his admission that bullfights can be boring and tedious. A very brief comment on the 'performance' of a bullfighter who impresses him and other aficionados immensely - is this major art or minor art? I make my own views very clear on this page.

Nobody can complain if a book about the financial problems of the Bank of X is mainly about the Bank of X, but the book would be seriously deficient if it ignored all context. How does the Bank of X compare with the Bank of Y or the Bank of Z? It may be that giving a much wider context, making comparisons with the financial problems of the non-banking sector, for instance, would benefit the book very much.

If someone wrote a book about the matador Padilla, then to concentrate attention on Padilla would be reasonable, but not to the exclusion of context - for example how does Padilla compare with other matadors? (Not to accept for one moment the bullfighting activities, of course.) To write about matadors, in a book for a wider audience, one which isn't made up only of bullfighting supporters, without the least attempt to put the 'artistry' claimed for some bullfighters in an artistic context, to mention other examples of artistry, seems very unwise. In this post, he finally sheds some light on the matter of the blunt horns of the bull he fought and killed: '... you ask about the blunt horn in the main photo of the bull I fought, Consejo. I have no idea why that was. Given the noise before he exited the corrals, I am guessing he charged the steel gate before he entered. The other horn wasn't all that sharp either, but not nearly so blunt that one.'

I don't treat information and discussions on the site mundo.taurino as definitive, but I quote some of the site's comprehensive discussion of afeitado, horn shaving: 'Why do bullfighters want to fight shaved bulls? The answer is that shaving a horn, even very discreetly, removes the naturally hardened tip. Bullfighters call it the "diamante", and this term reveals their concern. Just as diamonds are one of the hardest natural substances, the diamante of a horn has the greatest penetration potential. When this "edge" is removed or dulled, even though the horn is "re-sharpened", the horn becomes less dangerous. Toreros know there is a reduced chance of penetration from a shaved horn, much like a juggler might prefer to perform with butter knives rather than scalpels. It is really that simple.'

If this account of the matter has validity, then the blunt-horned bull fought by Alexander Fiske-Harrison wasn't as dangerous as a bull with sharp horns would have been, other things being equal. See also my comments on the animal whose horn tips were removed by boltcutters, left unexplained in 'Into the Arena.' On a matter unconnected with his comments on me, he adds this slogan to his blog page: *Viva la Fiesta Brava!* This seems to be a rousing endorsement of bullfighting. The slogan means 'long live bullfighting,' since 'la Fiesta Brava' is a reference to bullfighting. Anyone who has followed his 'investigations' will realize that there have been some very marked changes of heart and changes of emphasis. It isn't being too hard on him to have certain reservations and suspicions. Before his scheduled talk at Oxford, the one that was cancelled, he was transformed into a person with far more reservations than he had been expressing.

19.05.12

This photo is not what it seems

This photo, already shown and discussed in his entry for 08.03.12 makes a return now, at the top of the page, for the time being, with further comments, including this comment of his own:

Bullfighting is indeed cruelty to animals. So is killing them and eating them. So is letting them kill and eat each other.

This is an abysmal and ignorant ignoring of significant - all-important - contrasts. I discuss his claim that opponents of bullfighting have a duty to intervene in the killing of prey by predators, above, and what it reveals about his fitness to be regarded as a bullfighter-philosopher, including the Kantian principle that, in summary, 'ought' implies 'can.' I also discuss above conditions of slaughter, vastly different in abattoirs and bullrings.

08.06.12

He makes a big thing of the Nobel prize winning poet Seamus Heaney's writing on bullfighting. He includes, for example, this, on Seamus Heaney's experience of attending a bullfight: '... gradually I would find myself in a kind of trance: the choreography in the ring and the surge and response of the crowd with the music going on and on just carried you away. And your focus stayed tight on the man and the bull. There was something hypnotic about the cloak-work, something even vaguely Satanic about that black crumpled-horn killing-cap on the matador's head - when it was over, you blinked and asked yourself "Where was I?", then back you went like a sleepwalker for a second time. And this: "You'd been taken up to a high mountain and shown things in yourself and the world, things you couldn't deny because - like Hemingway - you had been there.'

He doesn't include this:

'When he [the poet W H Auden] faced the bull of reality, he was more a banderillero than a picador or matador: he made nimble dashes at the neck muscles, conspicuously rapid and skilful forays that were closer to the choreographer's than to the killer's art, closer to comedy than tragedy.

'Yet in the beginning, this metaphor invoking the panache of the corrida would not have served.'

I've written great deal on Seamus Heaney and the bullfight. Bullfighting and seduction on this page doesn't mention Seamus Heaney but deals with the spectacle of the bullfight, including 'the choreography in the ring and the surge and response of the crowd with the music going on on' and gives reasons why the spectacle can't be used to justify the cruelty. My page Seamus Heaney: ethical depth? gives my direct criticisms of his attitude to bullfighting, in the sections 'Seamus Heaney and bullfighting' and 'Seamus Heaney and the Colosseum.' In words quoted by Alexander Fiske-Harrison, Seamus Heaney links the experience of attending a bullfight with the Roman Colosseum: 'It's a Roman experience. Once you've been there, you're implicated, you have some inkling of what it must have been like in the Colosseum.'

When I drew attention to Seamus Heaney's favourable writing on bullfighting before an event at which he spoke in Suffolk, I was roundly condemned by some people. What? The great poet? Writing favourably on bullfighting? Impossible! An extensive page sets the record straight: Crap and credulity.

On this page, I mention in various places the act of the bullfight which follows the stabbing of the bull with the picador's lance: the stabbing of the bleeding and weakened bull with the six barbed banderillas, including this comment on A L Kennedy:

'After the picadors have lanced it '...another bull is left, staggering and urinating helplessly, almost too weak to face the

muleta.' She comments, prosaically, 'I do appear to be observing considerable distress.' The muleta, as she has explained in a footnote, is 'The small red cape, stiffened with a rod, which is used by the matador during the final passes which lead to the kill.' But before the bull could face the muleta, he still had to endure six more stabbings from the six barbed banderillas. These would bring him to an even more helpless state.'

Seamus Heaney describes the stabbing with the banderillas as 'closer to comedy than tragedy.' This alone is enough to call into question the claims that have been made for Seamus Heaney's 'ethical depth.'

There's a comment from Madeleine Rampling, a devotee of bullfighting who has been one of the more prolific contributors to the blog: 'TOTALLY and ABSOLUTELY' [End of comment.]

07.07.15

Comment of mine sent to AF-H's blog for publication, currently awaiting moderation:

'I haven't looked at your writing on bullfighting or any other matters for a long time. Today, I've begun to bring myself up to date and I find that there have been some striking developments. I didn't know that Antalya Nall-Cain no longer features in your life. I didn't know about your engagement to Sarah Pozner. Obviously, Sarah Pozner will be well aware of your notoriety as an apologist for bullfighting (although she wouldn't regard it as a matter of notoriety and as cause for deep shame.) Still, I'll do what I can to change her opinion about bullfighting (and about this aspect of your activities).

My Website page on bullfighting <http://www.linkagenet.com/themes/bullfighting.htm> already has very extensive sections on you, as well as a very short section on Antalya Nall-Cain. I'll be updating the page to reflect developments. I'll be contacting Sarah Pozner, using the address of the legal department at British United Providence Association, simply to draw her attention to some of the issues, in a reasonable and fair-minded way.

'I hope that this reply isn't moderated out of existence. Although you obviously have a degree of physical courage, you seem to be very timid in some respects – certainly, very timid as a moderator.'

Received from AF-H on the same day an email:

'I would remind your that current harassment legislation means if you contact my girlfriend in any manner having expressed in writing the intent you have, you can expect a visit from the police. If you write about her in a defamatory manner, which may in any way be regarded as injurious to her reputation or livelihood, you will be summoned to court and sued.'

A ridiculous email.

06/08/15

I find that the comment of 07/07/15, awaiting moderation for so long, failed to satisfy his stringent and exemplary standards. It doesn't avoid all offence to the bullfighter-maestro (or Bullfighter-Maestro.) An example of good practice: Madeleine Rampling's comment, quoted in the previous entry, 'TOTALLY and ABSOLUTELY.' Or these comments, in the section on his engagement.

After finding that the comment has disappeared completely, I find now that it's re-emerged and is still 'awaiting moderation.'

Alexander Fiske-Harrison: the bullfighter-comic

'Bullfighter-comic' is much more apt than the ridiculous description offered by 'The Times:' 'bullfighter-philosopher.'

Whatever else he may be, the killer of bulls (or one bull at least) Alexander Fiske-Harrison is a crackpot, whose rages are comic. I hadn't looked at his blog for a very long time but I was informed, with supporting evidence, that he'd posted this (quickly removed, like the blunder I mention in the next entry).

The Daily Fiske

It has been brought to my attention that there is a group of people who know me who have set up something in this name. All I can say is that I will be coming after you every way I know. I mean EVERY way. I will spill blood on this one. You have no idea.

I'm reminded of another threat, against a member of the Club Taurino of London who had annoyed him: 'I informed him that I would be contacting my lawyers to initiate legal proceedings the next working day for a piece of writing contravening the Defamation Act of 1996.' He decided to do no such thing. The perpetrators of 'The Daily Fiske,' whoever they are, have no reason to be alarmed. Alexander Fiske-Harrison may bark or howl or whine but he never seems to bite.

He writes in his 'Paeon to Pamplona' that there's 'a wonderful process of filtration, a vetting of men and women by means of blood. No one boring comes to Pamplona in the first place, and no one weak stays for more than a day.' His claim that Pamplona is only host to strong and interesting people is idiotic. He seems to be too absorbed in preening himself and praising himself.

His condescension, his withering scorn, *de haut en bas*, for everyone who fails to acknowledge his rightness and righteousness, may be intensely irritating to begin with, but after a time the bogus display begins to seem as hilarious as the episodic rages.

There's evidence that Alexander Fiske-Harrison has a very misguided attitude to the authors of internet material he doesn't like (not just *argumentum ad hominem* but *argumentum ad baculum*.) He wrote:

Whereas I think the toss written on the web is proof that threat of physical [sic] reprisal is the main civilising force in society.

(twitter @mclayfield, 16 May 2012.) The comment came immediately before others moaning about me, for the attention of the same Matthew Clayfield. Apart from all the obvious objections, this betrays a very flawed understanding of 'proof' on the part of el torero-filósofo. Is this really the finest intellect in the pro-bullfighting world?

The misguided fools who threatened Alexander Fiske-Harrison with physical violence for supporting bullfighting and taking part in bullfighting obviously thought of themselves as civilizing forces in society. AF-H seems to have overlooked this point.

Among Matthew Clayfield's explorations of the soul of bullfighting is this, on twitter: 'I hope that Matt Damon enjoyed the bullfight and that everyone else chokes on their sanctimonious spit.' (24 November 2011) He's made almost 15 000 contributions to twitter so far. My own total: 0. Not a member, but with a very great interest in concise forms as well as extended forms. See my page Aporisms. Without doubt, Matthew Clayfield writes his contributions to twitter but does he read all of them after he's written them? This particular one is obviously careless in its phrasing: the 'everyone else' is everyone but Matt Damon, so the comment applies to everyone watching the bullfight with Matt Damon.

Sanctimonious: 'making a display of holiness.' But it's defenders of bullfighting who are the experts in sanctimoniousness. Lorca compares the bullfight with the Roman Catholic mass. After the contents list of his book 'Into the Arena,' which describes how he became a 'torero' and 'matador' (Spanish for 'killer') Alexander Fiske-Harrison provides this ridiculously sanctimonious quote (it would be difficult for him to allege that I made it up):

Ser un torero es como hablar con Dios

[To be a bullfighter is like talking to God]

Eduardo Dávila Miura (matador)

The world of bullfighting is soaked in religiosity, as in blood: the bullring chapels where bullfighters pray, the Seville bullring's claim to be the 'Catedral del Toreo' or Cathedral of Bullfighting, the bullfighting festivals dedicated to saints, the religious trinkets associated with the 'Cristo de los Toreros' or 'Christ of the Bullfighters' ... But I expect that he uses 'sanctimonious' as a vague smear and less for its religious associations.

Antalya Nall-Cain: commentary on the writing of

[Update: Antalya Nall-Cain and AF-H are no longer together. She has been replaced by Sarah Pozner. Years after it was launched, Antalya Nall-Cain's blog still has only one entry.]
Antalya Nall-Cain is introduced in the section Alexander Fiske-Harrison: The Anti-blog:

'Alexander Fiske-Harrison is known as 'Xander' to his friends. To his girlfriend, Antalya Nall-Cain, the ex-model trainee nutritional therapist elder daughter of Lord Brockat, Xander, the amateur

...interpretation... daughter of Sara Pozner, former, the ultimate male model ex-trainee-bullfighter youngest son of Clive, is no ordinary man.'

She now has a blog of her own (antalyanallcain [dot] com). The information she gives in the 'About' section is very, very sparse, but she does let slip the fact that she's now studying for a BSc at the 'Centre for Nutrition Education & Lifestyle Management.' The first entry is a piece on the San Fermin festival at Pamplona. The focus is the common, narrow one: the running of the bulls, not the fate awaiting the bulls later in the day in the Pamplona bullring.

These comments on Antalya Nall-Cain are part of the section 'Some defenders of bullfighting' but as yet, she has supported bullfighting by attending bullfights but hasn't made any attempt to defend them, it seems. I hope that she won't turn out to be yet another 'aficionado manso.' The aficionado manso is the aficionado too cowardly to defend bullfighting with arguments and evidence, although this may be due to inability rather than cowardice. Opposition to bullfighting is greater than ever, and people such as Antalya Nall-Cain can expect strong criticism and can reasonably be expected to respond to the criticism. Now that she has this outlet for her writing, she has no excuse, surely.

Antalya Nall-Cain's tedious account includes this, 'Throughout the days, I met people from all walks of life ... I was wrapped up in every second ...' as well as this, on the climax, the experience at its most intense, supposedly:

'I counted the beats in my ears. Then, I saw them... [the bulls, of course] They charged by at a great speed and were gone.' Did she really count the beats in her ears?

Of course, she had a second chance to enjoy life-enhancing experience (allegedly) later that day, when those same bulls, backs torn open in preparation, were put to the sword. This first blog post omits all mention of that. I assume she did attend bullfights in Pamplona. What goes through the mind of such people when they see a bull thrashing around after the sword thrust, blood pouring out, before at last it sinks into the sand and is finished off? Perhaps Antalya Nall-Cain's blog will be providing some insights, but I doubt it.

She has a page on the site Pinterest which includes this:

'My favourite hairdresser, Maximiliano Centini, has just opened a Blow Dry Bar on Harwood Road. It's perfect to go last minute when you need to look your best for a date, event, etc. Hair, nails and eyebrows are all done in record time and at insanely affordable prices for the quality of the services provided.'

In terms of material trappings at least, and the pleasures that material trappings can buy, she leads a very privileged life. What is 'insanely affordable' for her would be insanely unaffordable for many, many people, of course. If they did pay those prices, they certainly wouldn't be able to eat, or to feed their children. Would she be inconsolable, would life be unlivable, would perfect hair, nails and eyebrows be no compensation if she no longer watched bulls suffer and die?

For years, Antalya Nall-Cain's blog has just one post, dating back to July 16.

Sarah Pozner, five star fiancée

Although I refer to Alexander Fiske-Harrison in this section, I don't in the least regard Sarah Pozner as simply the fiancée of Alexander Fiske-Harrison but as a (provisional) supporter of bullfighting in her own right. She's new to bullfighting. She's attended bullfights but she hasn't been nauseated by the barbarity of the bullfight. She's someone to be opposed in her own right, but not, of course, using any methods. I condemn unreservedly the issuing of death threats or threatening violence against supporters of bullfighting. If she ever does reject bullfighting decisively, then I'll be glad to remove this section.

Antalya Nall-Cain, despite her afición, has been rejected by Alexander Fiske-Harrison, or Antalya Nall-Cain rejected Alexander Fiske-Harrison, or perhaps they parted amicably, by mutual agreement. Sarah Pozner has a senior post in the legal department at BUPA (British United Provident Association). She's obviously well aware of the need for clear-sightedness and prudence in business dealings - although she wasn't acting prudently when she gave a five star rating to Hendon Way Motors on a Facebook page, given the fact that her father and mother are directors of Hendon Way Motors!

<https://www.facebook.com/sarah.pozner.3/activity/10155089819170247>

The endorsement has attracted the comment, 'Hilarious a review by a relative.' I don't have any knowledge of the kind of cars sold by Hendon Way Motors. It may well be that the company fully deserves a five star rating. It's very, very common, of course, for people to show less clear-sightedness and prudence in their personal lives than in practical matters. I hope I can show that there are disadvantages in endorsing Alexander Fiske-Harrison, just as there may be disadvantages in endorsing a motor company.

There's a long extract from a piece in a Spanish magazine on Alexander Fiske-Harrison's current blog, the 'Xander blog' which is mainly about him but includes information about her. There's nothing so crude as a star rating, but the magazine's rating is clear: he's very much a five star fiancé, she's obviously a five star fiancée.

It includes this hilarious section:

Descended from one of the most ancient and aristocratic families of the United Kingdom

aristocratic families of the United Kingdom,
descendant of King Edward III

ALEXANDER FISKE-HARRISON

The English Gentleman who one day became an expert of bullfighting

We open the gates of his historic ancestral home Otley Hall,
built in the 16th Century [now owned by Ian and Catherine
Beaumont] alongside his girlfriend, the beautiful lawyer
Sarah Pozner

INTERVIEW:

...

*Educated at Eton, he holds Masters in Arts and Sciences thanks
to his studies in Philosophy and Biology at the Universities of
Oxford and London. Son of a prosperous investment banker in
'The City', Alexander can presume to be the genuine
'gentleman'. Elegant, humanist, lover of nature and man of
letters ...*

The whole embarrassing post is at

[https://fiskeharrison\[dot\]wordpress\[dot\]com/2015/05/06/hola-spain/](https://fiskeharrison[dot]wordpress[dot]com/2015/05/06/hola-spain/)

There's an appreciative comment by Jack Sullivan:

'Xander, Your Viking blood explains
your heart of a Warrior and soul of
a Poet that fuels your passion for
the Bulls. Suerte Torero, Sulls'

Comments which are far from gushing and grovelling aren't
appreciated by Xander. He's far from fearless as a moderator.
Critical comments are ruthlessly purged.

The weaknesses of Alexander Fiske-Harrison are documented in
the three sections above. This is an example, from the section
Alexander Fiske-Harrison: the bullfighter-comic:

'Whatever else he may be, the killer of bulls (or one bull at least)
Alexander Fiske-Harrison is a crackpot, whose rages are
comic ...

'The Daily Fiske

'It has been brought to my attention that there
is a group of people who know me who have set up
something in this name. All I can say is that I
will be coming after you every way I know. I
mean EVERY way. I will spill blood on this one.
You have no idea.

[The entry was removed]

'I'm reminded of another threat, against a member of the Club
Taurino of London who had annoyed him: 'I informed him that I
would be contacting my lawyers to initiate legal proceedings the
next working day for a piece of writing contravening the
Defamation Act of 1996.' He decided to do no such thing. The
perpetrators of 'The Daily Fiske,' whoever they are, have no
reason to be alarmed. Alexander Fiske-Harrison may bark or
howl or whine but he never seems to bite.'

I wonder if Sarah Pozner has given nearly enough thought to
some possible pitfalls, or at least disadvantages, of associating
with, let alone sharing her life with, such a person as Alexander
Fiske-Harrison. Their life together has obviously been very
agreeable. This is from the Xander Blog:

'St-Jean-de-Luz has provided the most amazing break away
from Pamplona for my fiancée and I, but now I must return to
Pamplona. Our hotel, Résidence La Réserve, in the hills just
outside has been perfect as an escape, the heat of the sun
nicely cut through with the cool winds from the Atlantic, the
waves crashing on the rocks far below as background music to
the idyll ...

'However, now I am off back to the bulls and the feria de San
Fermín, with an interview already booked in post-*encierro*, 'bull-
run', tomorrow for Esquire TV at 8.10a.m. Madrid-time. See you
then.'

Meanwhile, the bulls are about to face the picador's lance, the
banderillas of the banderilla man, the sword of the matador and
very likely, with sword embedded in the back, one of those
stabbing implements used when the matador doesn't succeed in
killing with the sword - not in the least idyllic

Even so, he's probably the most prominent apologist for
bullfighting in this country. I for one will oppose whatever
girlfriends or fiancées he happens to attract, if they share his
support for bullfighting. Antalia Nall-Cain has an 'aficion.' What of
Sarah Pozner? She attends bullfights with him. She was troubled
for a time, it seems, by the plight of the horses in the bullfighting
ring but seems to have accepted his deluded assurances that
there was no need to worry, on the grounds that the horses'
protection works. I write in detail about bullfighting and equine
welfare in the sections above, The horses and Disembowelling
and 'The Golden Age of Bullfighting.'

Alexander Fiske-Harrison has a close association with Mephisto
Productions, [www\[dot\]mephistoproductions\[dot\]co\[dot\]uk](http://www[dot]mephistoproductions[dot]co[dot]uk)
which gives prominence to this chilling, portentous claim:
'Both ourselves and our creations are a debt owed to Death.'
Mephisto is more commonly referred to as Mephistopheles.
Mephistophelean' has associations ['wicked, fiendish'] which
aren't in the least attractive, although they may attract some
people. This is one of the current projects of Mephisto
Productions:

'Mephisto Productions is currently co-producing, with Passion
Pictures, a feature length documentary centering on the most
famous bullfighter in Spain, Cayetano Rivera Ordóñez, and a
fighting bull from the most famous ranch, Núñez del Cuvillo.

...

'Alexander Fiske-Harrison is to write the project and is the assigned co-producer from Mephisto. Fiske-Harrison spent two years in Spain studying bullfighting, both as a specator and practitioner ...'

What did this 'practitioner,' do exactly? I explain in the section The baboon and bull-killing club.

Sarah Pozner should be ashamed, although Alexander Fiske-Harrison has more reason for shame.

Stanley Conrad and the infant Jesus

Stanley Conrad is the American Web master of one prominent pro-bullfighting site, www.mundo-taurino.org 'Stanley Conrad runs the best site on bullfighting in English' according to 'about.com,' <http://spanish.about.com/cs/bullfighting> If this is the best that the Anglophone bullfighting world can do, this is further evidence that the bullfighting world in in deep trouble.

Evidence of his tastelessness amounting to stupidity. There's always a large picture on the home page - usually bull, bullfighter or bullfighter against bull. The picture for Christmas 2011 had a seasonal theme. It showed the stable where Jesus was born, an irritated bull in the stable and outside the stable the infant Jesus with a sword in one hand and a muleta in the other (a muleta being the small red cape used in the third stage of the bullfight when the bull is killed.) Mary his mother looks on. There's also a donkey, adorned with three little flags. In a bullring, the mules which drag out the bull after it has been killed are often adorned with these flags. Matthew Clayfield, writing in 'The Australian' (24 December 2009): 'Has ever there been a sillier nativity scene than the one that opens Monty Python's Life of Brian? Monty Python's nativity scene is a model of restrained and dignified propriety compared with the one chosen by Stanley Conrad.'

Evidence of his ignorance of the English language. A picture adorning the home page in May 2012 showed two bullfighters being carried on the shoulders of two fans and surrounded by adoring fans. The caption: 'El Juli and José Maria Manzares being fetid after a successful afternoon in Valledolid during the Feria de San Pedro Regaleado (a patron saint of bullfighters).' It has to be said, though, that 'fetid' is a notable improvement on 'fêted.' Collins English dictionary, entry for 'fetid:' 'having a stale nauseating smell.'

Stanley Conrad offers instructive instances of cross-linkage, my term for linkages which cut across marked contrasts. As an example, I'm an atheist but I have cross-linkages with the Christians who oppose the death penalty, such as the Roman Catholics of the Community of San' Egidio in Rome. I've a cross-linkage with Stanley Conrad in that we're both atheists. His site includes links to the 'Freedom from Religion Foundation' and 'To state the obvious, there's no linkage but instead marked contrast in a different matter, views on bullfighting.

Many people who share my loathing for bullfighting will have a cross-linkage with Stanley Conrad's political views, including his pacifism. He gives a link to the War Resisters' League' which claims to give 'on the ground tools to end the current war and all wars' and is 'determined not to support any kind of war ...' I consider their views naive and deluded. This isn't the place to discuss my reasons. I do that in many places on this site, but I'll quote an aphorism of mine, 'The evil of aggressive, militaristic states has been overcome often by aggressive military action. When by pacifism?' Until the War Resisters' League has transformed human nature and removed the causes of war, a process which may take many centuries, the League, and Stanley Conrad, has to make clear what guidance it would have given to states attacked by the Nazis, for example. Were the Belgians at fault when their army resisted heroically after the Nazi invasion of Belgium in 1940? Was the Belgian King Leopold III to be praised for surrendering, against the unanimous advice of his government? Were the Jews who took up arms against the Nazis in Warsaw, or those Poles who fought during the Warsaw uprising - pacifists would be well advised to find out as much as they can about these events - to be criticized? Were they war-mongers? Should they have simply waited until the causes of war had been ended? Stanley Conrad would approve of states such as Sweden and the Irish Republic, neutral during the Second World War, but they did nothing to end the nightmare of deportations to the death camps, executions, the crushing of all opposition. I discuss the neutrality of the Irish Republic, and the fact that Ireland only avoided invasion because Britain and other countries did the fighting for the Irish of the 'Free State,' on my page Ireland and Northern Ireland: distortions and illusions.

Giles Coren: Pensées et Réflexions d' un gourmet

Giles Coren is a British writer, best known as a restaurant critic. I very much doubt that he's ever eaten in a restaurant as bad as the one described in my poem 'The worst restaurant in the world,' which is in the section 'Humour and sarcasm' on the page Poems in Large Page Design. (To go to the top of the page, click on any poem or other text. Other pages on this site, including this one, use a different system, 'the rail.' Click on the rail, the blue band on the left, to go to top of page.) Giles Coren has defended bullfighting and if you want a culinary analogy for the quality of his writing on bullfighting, it would be closer to this spectacularly bad restaurant than any which serves edible food, without too much hostility to the customers.

He's a feeble-minded, a very confused writer, sometimes, when it comes to ethical reasoning. Any impression of robustness and vigour in his writing on the topic is purely a matter of style: style in its superficial sense, not the style of a writer of substance. To anyone with any thoughtfulness, his writing on bullfighting has nothing to offer.

This is Giles Coren on the experience of attending bullfights, which, according to him, offer 'that proximity to the bloody and barbaric birth of our visual culture, to the hell of the Roman Coliseum, that I would otherwise never know.'

This statement is confused, ridiculous, stupid, disturbing, disgusting: a short statement, but enough evidence that Giles Coren shouldn't be taken seriously when he writes about bullfighting. He could use very similar arguments for introducing public executions, which would offer 'that proximity to the bloody and barbaric birth of our former Christian culture, to the hell of the Roman crucifixions, that I would otherwise never know.'

I write about the Roman arenas where gladiators fought to the death in the section Bullfighting as an art form. Art critics and art historians, anybody with the least knowledge of the subject, would never in any circumstances endorse the view that the Roman Colosseum marks the birth of our visual culture. Visual culture was already ancient when in the 5th century B.C. the Parthenon and its wonderful sculpture were created in Athens. This is Giles Coren the ignoramus in art history. He's right to use the words 'bloody,' 'barbaric' and 'hell' of the Roman Colosseum, completely wrong to think that present-day civilization has any need to repeat and emulate these bloody, barbaric and hellish events.

In other writings, and here as well, it's obvious that he thinks that attending bullfights, approving of bullfights amounts to an urgent necessity. Otherwise, we're in danger of becoming sentimental, squeamish. The idea that human history and human experience present so many antidotes to sentimentality and squeamishness seems not to have quite registered with him. The idea that to appreciate the cruelties and evils which can occur in civilization we have to repeat and witness those cruelties and evils, in modified form, has a strange appeal for this dim-witted individual. If the Roman Colosseum was bloody, barbaric and hellish (and it was), why the need to imitate the carnage, why the need to witness the imitation of the carnage?

His thoughts - if you can call them thoughts - on 'the bloody and barbaric birth of our visual culture' are followed immediately by this, which gives the impression of a clinching argument (to Giles Coren). From his piece for 'The Times,' 'Enough sentimental bull about bullfighting.'

'Have you ever seen a terrified bull killed by a tattooed tractor boy with a fag in his mouth in a stinking East Anglian abattoir? I have.'

One elementary first-step in moral argument is to surmount the limitations of personal experience and to do everything possible to carry out a proper (survey). I give other examples of the pitfalls of personal experience in my page on Israel. There are non-moral examples as well, obviously. Supposing that Giles Coren, the restaurant critic who has often written enthusiastically about French cuisine, received this communication from someone trying to argue against Giles Coren's liking for French cooking: 'Have you ever been served a disgusting, inedible meal by a tattooed ex-tractor boy with a fag in his mouth in a stinking East Provence bistro? I have.'

I can well believe that the East Anglian 'tractor-boy' was inadequate, but at least he was equipped with a stunner which would cause immediate loss of consciousness and was easily used. The stunner was straightforward to use compared with the sword of the matador, aimed precariously at a small area of the bull's back, in an attempt to sever the aorta. To be able to use the stunner, the 'tractor-boy' didn't have to reduce the animal to a state of helplessness or near-helplessness, by having other slaughterhouse employees lance it in the neck, like picadors, and wound it six more times, like the banderilleros.

Below, in my review of Alexander Fiske-Harrison's 'Into the Arena,' I give information about afeitado, the practice of sawing off the tips of the bull's horns before entry into the ring, a practice which significantly reduces any danger to the bullfighter, with a link to Jérôme Lescure's film 'A Two-hour Killing,' which shows a terrified bull undergoing afeitado - and scenes from bullfights in the south of France which show the slaughter of bulls. I very much doubt that anything that the 'tractor boy' did to his bull can be compared with this treatment.

He ends his piece with a bizarre defence of bullfighting which could be used to defend so many other 'foreign' practices of the past and present which the ignorant and insular English haven't been able to appreciate - for example, the blinding of ortolans, small birds, in some parts of France so that the birds would concentrate all the more on their feed and become more tasty morsels for gourmets. The idea that appreciating Beethoven, Bach, Brahms and other German composers (in his language, 'snooty classical music composed by krauts') has anything to do with appreciating bullfighting, the idea that appreciating Verdi or Puccini (in his language, 'poncey Italian opera') makes it necessary to appreciate bullfighting - this is the thinking of a sub-East Anglian tractor boy, not the thinking of an Oxford-educated writer for 'The Times.' He writes of bullfighting,

'... too much blood and sand, too much foreignness, too much difference. I dare say he doesn't like paella either, or frog's legs, bratwurst, haiku, poncey foreign novels, French poetry or snooty classical music composed by krauts, funny-looking Portuguese people, poncey Italian opera, sushi . . .' (I've given this section a title in French - I'm not opposed to 'too much foreignness' myself, on the whole, although I am where the foreign customs, it can be argued, are barbaric.)

On the front cover of Alexander Fiske-Harrison's 'Into the Arena,' there's an ignorant quote from Giles Coren: 'A hero from another age, a fearless Englishman touched by madness. This endeavour owes as much to Captain Oates as to Ernest Hemingway ...'

Anyone who knows anything about the history of Antarctic exploration in the age before radio, modern transportation, other

modern equipment, the possibility of rescue by aircraft (still impossible in most circumstances, though), will know that what Captain Oates endured and risked is on a different plane from anything experienced by Alexander Fiske-Harrison.

Evidence that Giles Coren is a far better writer than his bog-standard writing on bullfighting suggests is available in quantity too. For example, I have James Dyson's book 'Against the Odds: an autobiography,' a notably successful book. It was written by Giles Coren. There's a note, "The right of Giles Coren to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988." James Dyson is a very gifted individual whose many strengths don't happen to include gifts as a writer, so he turned to Giles Coren for assistance. Richard Booth's autobiography 'My Kingdom of Books' offers a similar, just as legitimate, example. The founder of the remarkable book town has as co-author Lucia Stuart, his stepdaughter, who played a role very similar to Giles Coren's.

I quote him appreciatively on my page on Mobile phones: 'The iPod that cuts off the kid from the aural community, the gobbing in the street, the mobile phone used to connect to elsewhere because "here" is briefly tedious. They're all part of the same blurring of boundaries between private and public space. The abnegation of society.'

Daniel Hannan: the 'tender relationship' of matador-bull



Acknowledgments: The Freedom Association's photostream, flickr

Daniel Hannan is MEP for South East England ('MEP:' 'Member of the European Parliament') and a prominent English aficionado. He criticizes the appalling lack of moral fibre of some bulls, as he sees it: they just don't want to make an effort, the layabouts. In "Three Days in Málaga," published by the Club Taurino of London, he writes about the bullfights he saw. He writes in a superior tone about bulls he obviously regards as not nearly as fearless as himself, bulls unwilling to fling themselves on the lance of the picador, the six spiked banderillas or the matador's sword (not forgetting the weapons used to hack at the spine - more of the descabello later):

'These bulls, by San Miguel, were among the worst I've watched: cowardly, weak, lazy and petulant. Their lack of breeding was evident from the moment they sauntered out of the toril, [the holding area where bulls wait before they are made to enter the arena] trembling, fidgeting, lowering.'

Of a later bullfight:

'The first [bull] set the tone for the entire string, being manso [cowardly] and sulky.'

None of the bulls are spared *the standard stabbings*, a minimum of eight (he doesn't record whether or not they received many more.)

Alexander Fiske-Harrison writes about a bull which was stabbed in the spine at least seventeen times with the descabello (total stabbings: a minimum of 25) after it had been stabbed with the killing sword. The 'killing sword' really should be renamed, given the fact that it doesn't kill the bull at all in so many cases, even when the bull has been made to twist its body this way and that, in the hope that the sword will cut a vital internal organ, even when it's been pulled out and driven into the bull's back all over again. The rejón de muerte or 'lance of death' of the bullfighter on horseback, the rejoneador, likewise. Time after time, the lance is left sticking out of the back of the bull, the injured bull continuing to run.

Daniel Hannan records this, of the matador Talavante 'who gave up trying to kill his first bull after much dreich [Scots word meaning 'miserable,' most usually in connection with weather] hewing with the descabello: 'I lost count after his twelfth attempt.' (Total stabbings: a minimum of 20, and probably many more.)

In another article, 'France is the New Spain,' he writes of one French bullfight,

'Stéphane Meca was less than impressive, but the French crowd did not care. His first bull was enormous (700 kg), and Meca was taking few risks. The bull took two pics, the second of which went in repeatedly and way off to one side. After the banderillas, as the bull stood spurting fountains of blood ... ' there was 'a miserable excuse for a sword-thrust into the bull's flank.' And after that, the sword failing to kill it, attention turned as usual to the spine. It was treated to not just one of the specialist tools for

the spine. It was treated to not just one of the specialist tools for severing the spine but both, the sword and the dagger, the descabello and puntilla.

And like Alexander Fiske-Harrison and so many others, Daniel Hannan isn't in the least tempted to give up watching and supporting an activity which causes such suffering. Do they really believe that this is one of the finer or one of the finest achievements of European civilization, not in the least a cause for shame?

Daniel Hannan writes, 'The Spaniard is watching, not a contest, but a ritualised dance: a relationship so tender and tragic that it might almost be called love.' ('Bullfighting in Brussels.') My comments on A L Kennedy's similar claims in her book 'On Bullfighting.'

'... there is something sexual about the faena' (From the Glossary: 'The faena is 'The final act of the *corrida* - the Act of the Kill.') Of another bull: 'Rather than tricking the bull, Ponce gives the impression that he knows what it wants before it does, that he is here to help. This is the body knowledge of a lover...'
'But she's often denied the fulfilment she craves and the death of the bull is like bad sex, very bad sex. Before the bull can die, though, there's a kind of perverted foreplay, in which the spears of the picadors and the banderillas play their part. She writes, '...the picadors spear as much danger as they can out of the bull.'

'After the picadors have lanced it '...another bull is left, staggering and urinating helplessly, almost too weak to face the muleta.' She comments, prosaically, 'I do appear to be observing considerable distress.' The muleta, as she has explained in a footnote, is 'The small red cape, stiffened with a rod, which is used by the matador during the final passes which lead to the kill.' But before the bull could face the muleta, he still had to endure six more stabbings from the six barbed banderillas. These would bring him to an even more helpless state.'

'She writes that '... in the corrida, the matador is not exposed to physical and emotional damage by duty, or conscription - he is a volunteer, a true believer, a lover with his love. And there are no limits to love, it is quite merciless.' This attempt at high-flown language is an abject failure, a chicken's attempt to soar. At least 'merciless' is accurate, given that in this case the lover may plunge the sword into his love repeatedly, hitting bone, or thrust the sword in and take it out with another sword, or the lover may hack away at the spine of his love with a heavier sword.' Bullfighting has surely nothing to do with love, except in the sense that bullfighters 'love' fighting bulls and bullfighting supporters 'love' going to bullfights. Bullfighting surely has linkages, deep within the disturbed and diseased psyche of the bullfighter or bullfighting supporter with pathological forms of the erotic, with sadomasochistic eroticism - with the emphasis upon the sadistic: the moment of truth as the moment of sadistic orgasm. Can appearances be so deceptive, can harmless looking people really be seeking to improve their existence by such disreputable means? Yes, quite easily. I don't claim that all bullfighters and bullfighting supporters respond to the bullfight in this way by any means - but the other ways of responding are disreputable or worse than disreputable in themselves.

Criticism of bullfighting has to be multi-faceted, including such matters as illusion and delusion, fabrications, falsification, exaggeration, misleading use of evidence, complacency and evasion. It's not commonly recognized - outside anti-bullfighting circles - to what extent these faults are rife in the bullfighting world.

Above, I give many examples of one of the gross delusions of the bullfighting world, its belief that bullfighting requires courage of an altogether special - or even unique - kind.

The bullfighting supporters in the bullfight audience have an unhealthy attitude to matters of 'cowardice' as well as courage. Here, I concentrate on their attitude to the 'cowardice' of many bulls, not their criticism of bullfighters who show cowardice in the ring. When bullfighting supporters, almost in unison, whistle to show their disapproval and contempt as a 'cowardly' bull is dragged out of the arena, then surely this amounts to hypocrisy, lack of self-awareness, lack of self-criticism, a whole range of glaring, undesirable, diseased faults.

There may well be members of the bullfighting audience who have conclusively shown a degree of physical courage, but this isn't enough to establish the moral standing of any individual. Goering, the corrupt Nazi, was described by one witness when he was tried at Nuremberg for crimes against humanity as 'a bastard, but a brave bastard.' Physical courage of a high order has been displayed time and again in the service of bad causes.

An adequate ((survey)) of courage has to go beyond physical courage, to include moral and intellectual courage, the kind which an aficionado needs to offer evidence and arguments. An aficionado completely unwilling to do that is an 'aficionado manso.' There are detailed arguments on this page, about the supposed artistry of the bullfight, the supposed courage of the bullfighters, and many other things. I set a challenge to bullfighting supporters: give an answer to these arguments, in detail. Provide a detailed discussion which attempts to answer anti-bullfighting arguments one by one. Let's bring this matter into the open. Bullfighting supporters must now be prepared to defend themselves and their supposed 'art form' publicly. The Web isn't the only place where this public examination can be conducted, but it's the most accessible.

On to other aspects of Daniel Hannan's 'afición.'

'The Death of French Culture' by Donald Morrison and Antoine Compagnon argues that French culture is no longer a force to be reckoned with, that it has lost its international importance. French writers, film-makers and other luminaries have become tedious.

Daniel Hannan, on the other hand, writes to writes to a correspondent, 'Esteban,' 'I think the fiesta is enjoying its second golden age, and nowhere more than in France.' Alexander Fiske-Harrison writes that 'bullfighting is already contained in the very facts of life itself.'

If the novel, poetry, painting, opera and other genres have become mediocre - or a little better than mediocre or a great deal worse - in France then bullfighting can't possibly be an adequate substitute. If Donald Morrison and Antoine Compagnon are correct in their analysis, then the French have every reason to be concerned. The supposed glories of the fiesta in France - in actual fact manifestations of an 'art form' which is minuscule rather than minor and actively harmful - can't compensate for any decline in serious achievement in substantial forms of culture

The Club Taurino of London: fighting talk

The Club Taurino of London, or at least one of its prominent members, has taken up a new activity, to add to bullfighting: Fiske-Harrison fighting. A few or more than a few members of the club (it's not the most open and communicative of organizations) have sided with Alexander Fiske-Harrison, for example the aficionado Barbara Ritchie. This is from one of her comments on his blog (06.05.12): 'YOU ARE NOT ALONE at being the punching bag at the end of Mr. Anorak's fist. (and in this, Mr. Anorak reminds one rather more of a metaphorical football hooligan than a *corrida* aficionado!) In La Divisa # 184 (Sept./Oct. 2008), on p.66, I DARED TO EXPRESS AN OPINION!!!!!!' (Another comment from this prolific writer, lavish in her use of punctuation marks, includes this: 'And what's this about cricket J.R. p.44) ?????????? (never, to my knowledge EVER to have mentioned it, I am mystified).'

The 'prominent member,' the object of Alexander Fiske-Harrison's wrath and Barbara Ritchie's wrath is Jock Richardson, an editor of the Club Taurino's journal, 'La Divisa.' He writes in the journal '... most of us answered [the ethical problem of bullfighting] early in our taurine journeys by admitting that by being aficionados we are participating in something that it is cruel and immoral, and many other negative things besides, but that we could live with our immorality and support of cruelty.' Alexander Fiske-Harrison: 'The "most of us", phrase, is an astonishing piece of arrogance.' Barbara Ritchie again: 'Wow!!! In it he tries really hard to make the case that you are a parvenue [sic] intellectual lightweight who is over-impressed with himself [ie that Alexander Fiske-Harrison is a parvenu intellectual lightweight who is over-impressed with himself] while he remains blissfully unaware of what a ponderous, nit-picking, boring old goat HE actually must be!! Heaven spare us !!!'

The Club Taurino of London caters for voyeurs with a specialist interest in blood: not blood spilt in an inartistic way. It contains the largest collection of aficionados in the country. It's unrivalled in its comprehensive range of exhibits.

Alexander Fiske-Harrison doesn't have a high opinion of English aficionados, unlike Spanish ones. In Chapter 8 of *Into the Arena* he mentions that he was contacted by Al Jazeera TV, who wanted him to give a pro-bullfighting perspective, or, as he puts it, 'a balancing voice.' He assumes that the TV station couldn't find anyone in England able to give the pro-bullfighting perspective, or 'balancing voice,' 'without frothing at the mouth.' He's since modified this harsh view of English aficionados of the bullfight. 'I have since discovered that there are one or two English *aficionados* who are perfectly reasonable and likeable, such as David Penton, secretary of the Club Taurino of London, or Sam Graham who sits on their committee, whom I will go out of my way to have a drink with.'

Alexander Fiske-Harrison has written to defend himself on his blog (27.04.12), including this: 'I informed him that I would be contacting my lawyers to initiate legal proceedings the next working day for a piece of writing contravening the Defamation Act of 1996.' He decided to do no such thing. 'I have decided that bankrupting and closing - with my legal fees alone, if not the damages - the only club centring around bullfighting in my home country would be a cruel and extreme reaction.' I think that his complete confidence that he'd win his case if it came to court may well be completely mistaken - this is the experience of many people who have sued for slander or libel and lost. I've only read, however, the few extracts provided by Alexander Fiske-Harrison. The full text isn't available to the public.

After giving his retraction (abandoning his plan to go to court) he adds this: 'However, I simply cannot wait for a quarterly magazine to print the necessary apologies, retractions and rebuttals by me, hence I am writing this here.' This contains a mistake of fact. The magazine, 'La Divisa,' isn't a quarterly one. He used to be a member of the Club Taurino and ought to have known this. The Club Taurino's Website gives the information in a prominent place that 'La Divisa is published six times yearly.' After this, it gives the information, 'Editors - Jock Richardson & Tristan Wood.' Alexander Fiske-Harrison seems to think that Jock Richardson is the sole editor: '... a 4 700-word attack on my work and character appeared in the club magazine, *La Divisa*, written by its editor Jock Richardson.'

His anger remains intense. He refers to '... this total abuse of his power as editor, using the club magazine as a mouthpiece for his own temperamental outpourings, and making the club culpable for having allowed this to be written in their name (how much it reflects the earlier mentioned cabal of senior members of the club I do not care to speculate on.)

'From here, Richardson's self-indulgently long article combines picking up genuine errors of mine such as my quick estimate of

the size of the bullring in Cazalla de la Sierra – it seats a couple of thousand not the hundreds I thought – with borderline errors – I say Pedro Romero “founded” the first bullfighting school, when he was the actually founding Maestro – to his own absurdities: he spends 230 words arguing my description of El Fandi’s pardoned bull in Sanlúcar de Barrameda is false only to finish [sic] by writing that it was perfectly correct.

‘The fact that I have had to write a 6,000-word article to rebut Richardson’s less than 5,000-word article about a more than 100,000-word book tells you the relative error levels between the two of us. Also, it raises a profound question about abuse of power and “quis custodiet ipsos custodios?” [sic] or rather “who edits the editors”. No properly run publication would allow such a bloated combination of opinion, diatribe and unfounded, slanderous claims into print.’

In this last paragraph Alexander Fiske-Harrison makes another error. If he’s going to quote Latin, he ought to get it right. In the quotation, attributed to the satirist Juvenal but now believed to be an interpolation, ‘custodios’ should be ‘custodes.’ Jock Richardson seems to have confined himself to the errors in the book ‘Into the Arena.’ Alexander Fiske-Harrison’s blog does contain the occasional error, such as this Latin quotation. Here’s another from his blog:

16.06.11

Alexander Fiske-Harrison quotes the whole of James Owen’s loopy review of ‘Into the Arena’, published in the ‘Mail on Sunday.’ (10.06.11) This is the title, and one of the statements.

Where Hemingway feared to tread

For all his writing about it, Ernest Hemingway never went into the bullring.

Alexander Fiske-Harrison, unlike Hemingway, wasn’t afraid, it seems. He did enter the bullring. This is ever so slightly puzzling. Here is Hemingway (to the right of the bull and just in front of it) obviously in a bullring.



James R. Mellow gives an account of Hemingway’s performance in the bullring in his ‘Hemingway: A Life Without Consequences.’ ‘I appeared in the bull ring on 5 different mornings - was cogida [tossed] 3 times - accomplished 4 veronicas in good form and one natural with the muleta,’ Hemingway boasted in a letter to Pound. Writing to Edward O’ Brien, he claimed he had been “gored,” a very different thing.’ These were chaotic fights. He also describes another fight, which was more formal. In a letter to Bill Smith, he wrote that this appearance wasn’t a success, even though the bull’s horns were blunted. (Alexander Fiske-Harrison hasn’t denied that the horns of the bull he fought were blunted too, after I’d raised the issue.) There’s no doubt that Hemingway did enter the bullring, then.

The front flap of this very interesting book includes this: ‘There have been a number of Hemingway biographies since his death, but until now no biographer has set out to challenge the image that Hemingway fashioned for himself ... Through much research and new material, Mellow reveals aspects of the writer’s life unexplored by previous biographers, corrects the record on important matters of chronology and fact, and explodes many of the myths Hemingway carefully constructed around his life.’ James Owen’s complete review furthers Alexander Fiske-Harrison’s attempt at the construction of a mythical persona, a legend to rival Hemingway’s (for people impressed by such things) greater than Hemingway’s to an extent: Hemingway, after all, ‘never went into the bullring,’ supposedly. ‘Into the Arena’ has this: ‘Ernest Hemingway is without doubt the greatest writer in English on bullfighting as it was in the early twentieth century.’ And who is without doubt the greatest writer in English on bullfighting as it is in the early twenty-first century? Could it possibly be Alexander Fiske-Harrison?

A much later post, of May 13, 2012, also entitled ‘Where Hemingway feared to tread,’ belatedly gives a factually accurate account, one which makes claims about Hemingway and running, not Hemingway in the bullring. ‘Ernest Hemingway never ran in Pamplona despite making it so famous.’ Alexander Fiske-Harrison has done so.

James R. Mellow doesn’t endorse the myth-making of Hemingway and he doesn’t endorse the industrious myth-making of the bullfighting industry, accepted without question by so many writers and commentators. This is from his account of

many whiners and commentators. This is from his account of Hemingway's first experience of a bullfight. He was accompanied by Robert McAlmon.

'When the first bull charged head-on into one of the picador's horses and tossed it, McAlmon rose to his feet with a yell. He liked it even less when he saw another horse trotting around the ring dragging its entrails. McAlmon's memories of that first bullfight were of the unreality of the scene and the insensitive crowd daring the matador from the safety of the stands, the cruelty of the kill.'

*He discusses Max Eastman's review of *Death in the Afternoon* in *The New Republic*: 'Why, Eastman wondered, did Hemingway indulge in such clouds of juvenile romanticism whenever he crossed the border into Spain?' The same question could be asked of Alexander Fiske-Harrison. A comment made on an article of Hemingway's for the *Toronto Daily Star* (in this instance without a direct bullfighting connection but relevant to bullfighting) could be made of Alexander Fiske-Harrison: 'The article was another instance of his ability to create a public persona for himself. It read well and was self-serving ... making it clear to readers of the *Star* that he was a bona fide hero.'*

By the end of his life, Hemingway had become disillusioned with the bullfight. This biographer quotes these words, '... the whole bullfight business is now so corrupt and seems so unimportant ...'

Some of the pages of the journal of the Club Taurino, 'La Divisa' are available on the Web. They make strange reading, although no stranger than 'Into the Arena.' There's jolly sociability, with cheery photographs of some of the membership, comparisons are drawn between bullfighting and ballroom dancing, there are entranced and sometimes strained evocations of the artistry [sic] of the bullfight, and things such as this: 'After the banderillas, as the bull stood spurting fountains of blood ... there was 'a miserable excuse for a sword-thrust into the bull's flank.' And from the same member, Daniel Hannan: 'I lost count after his twelfth attempt.' This is a reference to the number of blows to the spine of the bull with the descabello, after the 'killing sword' had failed to kill. (I wouldn't know what the record is, but Alexander Fiske-Harrison witnessed a significantly greater number.) In general, anyone with a clinical interest in haematophilia will find useful material in 'La Divisa.' I haven't been able to find a single instance of moral reflection or moral reasoning in the pages of 'La Divisa' available to me.

Tristan Wood (better known for his book 'How to watch a bullfight') has an article in *La Divisa* which raises no objection to the taking of children to bullfights. He writes about the kiddies' entertainment in France, which includes violent death after multiple stab wounds. This is from his account of '... the Feria des Vendanges in Nîmes (about which more in the next *La Divisa*). A young mother and her son (probably around six or seven years old) were sat next to me before the start of one of the corridas, only for them to give up their seats as the rightful ticket-holders arrived. It transpired the mother had done what a number of the locals often do – bought a billet for the unnumbered stone rows at the top of the Roman arena, only to then clamber down to the more expensive wooden seating once the plaza band has struck up (some 10 minutes or so before the paseíllo) and the entertainment has officially begun. They eventually watched the corrida sat on the tendido stairway, the little boy sitting between his mother's knees (ah, to have a mother like that!), or going excitedly to the fencing at the front of this seating area for a closer look at events on the sand below.'

What the membership won't do, it seems, is debate bullfighting and defend bullfighting against objections. I've done my best to start a debate. In my exchange of emails with one of the officials of the Club Taurino, I included this (its ultra-polite tone in precarious contrast with my loathing and disgust.)

'I've revised pages of my site which used material in emails to me to argue against the sender of the email. I've been removing these sections, because I see the importance of keeping open lines of communication with people whose views I oppose in one way or another. So, my page on bullfighting no longer uses the content of emails addressed to me to argue against the views of the person who sent them. The primary instance concerns Stanley Conrad of mundo-taurino. I no longer quote or use material in his emails to me. I now depend only upon printed material and material on Websites, such as your own Website. [ctol.org] Journalists, of course, don't publicize, or shouldn't publicize, any opinions which are 'off the record' and I now regard emails addressed to me as 'off the record.' I want people who contact me by email (or letter) to have the confidence that the material won't be used against them. I think it's important too to recognize that an email may be composed hurriedly, that it may or may not represent the considered views of the sender. I've no doubt that your email to me, a very detailed and informative one, and one which I've read very carefully, does represent your considered views, but be that as it may, I won't be using the material in your email on my site. If any of the members of the Club would like to contact me, then so far as I'm concerned, it falls within the sphere of private debate. As for emails I send, then obviously the recipients are at liberty to use them in any way they like, or not to use them.'

There has been a distinct shortage of Club Taurino members stepping forward to engage in debate - not a single one, despite these guarantees. In the circumstances, to include the Club Taurino of London in the section 'Some defenders of bullfighting' is to give a very loose meaning to 'defenders.'

Defenders of bullfighting who have emailed me have defended themselves and / or bullfighting so ineptly that this policy has come to seem unnecessarily kind. I decided it was better that, for bullfighting at least, a robust policy of 'email me if you think you can withstand any criticism' would be better. For defenders of

bullfighting, the option of ticking a 'no publicity' box wouldn't be available any longer.

There's a substantial case to be made against aficionados from the viewpoint of virtue ethics, the approach to ethics inaugurated by Aristotle. Aficionados are critical of bulls they perceive as 'cowardly' ('manso' in Spanish) from their position of complete safety. (The matadors are in relative safety.) But what of the 'aficionado manso,' who doesn't even have the courage to defend bullfighting openly? If any courage is needed at all.

A L Kennedy: including ALK on the killing of horses



A L Kennedy. Acknowledgments: Abrinsky

These are extracts from my review of A L Kennedy's *On Bullfighting* in the reviews section of the site, providing further evidence of the distortions and illusions of apologists for bullfighting. I don't indicate the places where material is omitted or use inverted commas.

The fast approaching death of the bull sometimes seems to bring A L Kennedy closer and closer to a kind of orgasmic writing. 'Ponce talks to the toro gently...The faena lasts six minutes: six minutes of coaxing and pauses...The dust lifts about the pair as they tighten on each other...he arches his body high and back...As the bull sinks, Ponce faces it...I have never seen the gesture filled with this tension, this sense of worship and violation, this naked hunger for a soul.' Later: '...there is something sexual about the faena' and 'Matadors often liken the faena to making love.' (From the Glossary: 'The faena is 'The final act of the *corrida* - the Act of the Kill.')

Of another bull: 'Rather than tricking the bull, Ponce gives the impression that he knows what it wants before it does, that he is here to help. This is the body knowledge of a lover...'

But she's often denied the fulfilment she craves and the death of the bull is like bad sex, very bad sex. Before the bull can die, though, there's a kind of perverted foreplay, in which the spears of the picadors and the banderillas play their part: '...the picadors spear as much danger as they can out of the bull.'

After the picadors have lanced it '...another bull is left, staggering and urinating helplessly, almost too weak to face the muleta.' She comments, prosaically, 'I do appear to be observing considerable distress.' The muleta, as she has explained in a footnote, is 'The small red cape, stiffened with a rod, which is used by the matador during the final passes which lead to the kill.' But before the bull could face the muleta, he still had to endure six more stabbings from the six barbed banderillas. These would bring him to an even more helpless state.

This is from the first bullfight she witnessed. After it, she writes, 'I have to see more corridas.'

And more scenes which didn't bring her to walk out: 'The picadors are, if anything, more brutal in their work...' The picadors lance the neck muscles of the bull, but she asks for our sympathy not for the bull but for her own neck muscles: 'Take it for granted that lifting and travelling still hurt my neck...' Later, she writes about the difficulty of settling into 'another two hours or so of sitting upright, of trying to make my neck muscles relax, of thinking the pain away,' the difficulty, that is, of sitting for two hours or so watching bulls stabbed eight times or more in the neck muscles.

Again and again she forfeits our sympathy and unwittingly makes clear the disproportion between the suffering of the animals and her own sufferings.

'At the kill, the young man's sword hits bone, again and again and again while the silence presses down against him. He tries for the descabello. Five blows later and the animal finally falls.' The descabello, as the Glossary explains, is 'A heavy, straight sword' used to sever the spine.

'I have already watched Curro Romero refuse to have almost anything to do with his bull, never mind its horns. (The severely critical response of a member of the audience to a cowardly bull or a cowardly bullfighter.) He has killed his first with a blade placed so poorly that its tip protruded from the bull's flank...As the animal coughed up blood, staring, bemused, ['bemused?'] at each new flux the peones tried a *rueda de peones* to make the blade move in the bull's body and sever anything, anything at all that might be quickly fatal, but in the end the bull was finally, messily finished after three descabellos.'

The suffering of the bull 'left, staggering and urinating helplessly, almost too weak to face the muleta' wasn't ended by a painless and instantaneous death: 'Contreras...misses the kill...Contreras tries again, hooking out the first sword with a new one ...Contreras finally gives the descabello.' So, the sword is embedded in the animal, the sword is pulled out and thrust into the animal yet again, but it's still very much alive. The descabello is hard at work in this book. People who have the illusion that the 'moment of truth' amounts to a single sword-thrust and the immediate death of the bull are disabused of the notion here.

More often, the moment of truth is hacking at the spine with the descabello.

Even the sexual apotheosis which Ponce has offered is accompanied by this hack-work: 'He has risked a long faena, working on the bull, steadying it, but still the kill goes badly and a time warning sounds as Ponce tries to finish the job and the regulation twelve minutes for the kill expire. Three times he goes in with the sword, then there is a rueda de peones, then three descabellos before the animal sways and falls.'

The horses are mentioned very briefly. (For me, the suffering of the horses is a central objection to bullfighting.) A decree of the government of Primo de Rivera ordered that horses should be given a quilted covering 'to avoid those horrible sights which so disgust foreigners and tourists.' This was in response not to the concerns of aficionados but the concern of Primo de Rivera's English wife. A 'horrible sight' ended by this reform was disembowelling of the horse ('evisceration' sounds too clinical.) Before this reform, disembowelling was very common. But the protective mattress didn't end the suffering of the horses. It hides many injuries. Again and again, horses suffer injuries to their internal organs and broken ribs. Horses are still gored in areas unprotected by the mattress.

Bullfighting supporters generally acknowledge these facts. A L Kennedy admits them: 'Arguments are cited which state, reasonably enough, that the blindfolded and terrified horse is currently buffeted by massive impacts, suffering great stress and possibly broken bones.' She might have mentioned the internal injuries which horses also suffer. The Wikipedia entry for Picador has this, 'injuries to the horses often include broken ribs and damage to internal organs.'

This is a film which shows what can happen to a horse in the bullring. The picador enters the ring 1:50 into the film and during the next three minutes, the horse is attacked, with 'action replays.' The crowd responds by applauding. Two women in the audience are shown at one point, and then a little later. One smiles, as if the episode is cause for amusement, the other yawns, as if bored.

Members of the audience at this bullfight (Seville, 20.04.12) included Alexander Fiske-Harrison, his girlfriend - Antalya Nall-Cain - and his father and mother.

Even if this horse was very lucky and suffered no broken ribs and internal injuries, it can be imagined what terror it will feel when blindfolded and led out to take part in the parade before the bullfight, what horror it will feel when forced to enter the arena to face the bull, what terror it will feel when it hears and smells the bull.

Some aficionados have advocated 'kinder' treatment of the horses. Humane aficionados! What is the reform proposed by these good, kind-hearted people to reduce animal suffering?

This: taking away the protective mattress and returning to disembowelling of the horses! As A L Kennedy puts it, 'a return to the 'kinder' option of evisceration.' She perhaps forgets that death by disembowelling - evisceration - was often not instantaneous. As Hemingway admits, a horse might carry on running whilst trailing its intestines behind it. (If only some of the horse's innards were showing, the gap in the horse's body could be filled with sawdust 'by a kindly veterinarian.' 'No sweeter, purer sawdust ever stuffed a horse than that used in the Madrid ring' according to Hemingway.)

She discusses these things in a strangely detached tone, and, in the same strangely detached tone, 'It is believed in some quarters that horse-killing greatly improves the bull's 'spirit' for the remainder of its time in the ring and is the only fit proof of its 'bravery'. And she goes on attending bullfights.

She's properly sceptical about the bullfight as art form:

'The corrida can sometimes create the effect of art (as can, for that matter, a voodoo ceremony, a funeral or a high mass) but it is divided against itself, because of the unpredictability of the bull, because of the numerous abuses of its own laws, because it hopes to weaken the bull, but leave it glorious, to defend the matador, but give him something to overcome. The corrida, although it has its own rigours and remarkable individual toreros, currently lacks the overarching discipline, creative economy and communicative breadth of an art. It could also be said that its levels of cruelty and violence prevent it being an art, that an art cannot exceed certain parameters of damage, that it cannot cause death.'

Even so, this is weedy prose, for someone with some reputation as a prose stylist: 'communicative breadth' is the language of educational bureaucrats and '...cannot exceed certain parameters' the language of a scientific paper, necessary in most cases - 'the levels of adenosine triphosphate in the biosynthesizing cell cannot exceed certain parameters.' I'd have to claim that my own way of expressing A L Kennedy's last point is far better. From the section Bullfighting as an art form.

Bullfighting and tragedy in which, unlike A L Kennedy, I do grant bullfighting some right to being an art form, although the most limited and perverted of art forms:

'Hemingway, 'Death in the Afternoon.' 'Bullfighting is the only art in which the artist is in danger of death.' I would emphasize a different aspect. Bullfighting is the only art form where the artist inflicts suffering and death, the only art form which is morally wrong. Bullfighting is the pariah amongst the arts. Suffering and death have enough power. An art should do nothing to increase it. In other arts, suffering and death are confronted, explained, found impossible to explain, raged against, transcended, balanced by consolation and joy, not inflicted.'

The main weakness of the book, apart from the shocking evidence that this is someone whose feelings are severely restricted, is the common or universal failing of those who find excuses for bullfighting, the glamorisation of danger and the failure to put the danger to the bullfighters in context. I deal with this at length in the courage of the bullfighters.

A L Kennedy makes a grotesque comparison, in connection with the bullfighter 'El Juli,' who, rumours have it, 'will soon attempt to face seven bulls within the course of one day. At this level the

life of the matador must be governed by the same dark mathematics which calculates a soldier's ability to tolerate combat: so many months in a tour of duty, so many missions flown, and mental change, mental trauma, becomes a statistical inevitability. But in the corrida, the matador is not exposed to physical and emotional damage by duty, or conscription - he is a volunteer, a true believer, a lover with his love. And there are no limits to love, it is quite merciless.' This attempt at high-flown language is an abject failure, a chicken's attempt to soar. At least 'merciless' is accurate, given that in this case the lover may plunge the sword into his love repeatedly, hitting bone, or thrust the sword in and take it out with another sword, or the lover may hack away at the spine of his love with a heavier sword. In the book, the merging of love and killing is only superficially deep. Love and killing are insidiously merged, recklessly and dangerously. Lorca's execution by a nationalist firing squad during the Spanish Civil War, instead of being a squalid and despicable act, is transfigured. Of Lorca, 'he might almost be aware of the darkness coming, might almost be asking himself when it will come, when a man who loves his country will be killed by other men who love it differently.' As an intransigent opponent of executions I make no exception for the execution of the bullfighting supporter Lorca, and of the bullfighter who was killed at the same time. After he was killed, Lorca was shot in the backside. The Falangist Juan Luis Trescastro: 'We killed Federico Garcia Lorca. I gave him two shots in the arse as a homosexual.' Does this shatter and make ridiculous the romanticized vision of A L Kennedy? Or is shooting someone in the backside an act of love too, like the sword thrust to the bull? More evidence that she has a fondness for 'transfigurations' which falsify reality. 'I wonder again why Lorca came back to Granada, why he came home, why he took that last risk and came looking for extinction.' This *came looking for extinction* is pure supposition, imagined, arising from that same source as the over-written musings on the death of the bull at the hands of his 'lover.' In the Spanish civil war, according to Julius Ruiz, the republicans executed almost 38 000 people and the nationalists about 100 000 (and about 50 000 more after the war was over). Other sources give widely differing estimates, but whatever the number, it's likely that very few of these victims, innocent or far from innocent themselves, were 'looking for extinction' and there's no evidence that Lorca had a death wish. The Falange, the Fascist or near Fascist group, were the foremost executioners in the conflict. The group 'had rapidly developed into the nationalists' paramilitary force, assuming the task of 'cleaning up'...Their leader, José Antonio, had declaimed that 'the Spanish Falange, aflame with love, secure in its faith, will conquer Spain for Spain to the sound of military music.' (Antony Beevor, 'The Battle for Spain: The Spanish Civil War 1936 - 1939'.)

The republican Lorca and the nationalists were linked as well as contrasted. They were linked by the cult of death. One nationalist rallying cry was 'Long live death!' Lorca: 'Spain is unique, a country where death is a national spectacle...In every country death has finality. Not in Spain. A dead person in Spain is more alive than is the case anywhere else.' Another republican, El Campesino, again quoted in 'The Battle for Spain': 'I am not pretending that I was not guilty of ugly things myself, or that I never caused needless sacrifice of human lives. I am a Spaniard. We look upon life as tragic. We despise death.' Facts and figures can be supplied which make A L Kennedy's 'dark mathematics' ridiculous. I give just a few of them above. And, ten years after she wrote about him and his likely demise, El Juli is still with us, still very much alive, despite the dark mathematics. (And the author's back problems have also subsided.)

In this book, A L Kennedy is an 'imaginative' writer in the worst sense of the word, as in 'The matador is at the heart of a strange balance between the demands of safety and fame [mention of the money at this point would have spoilt the effect], between the instinct for self-preservation and the appetite for the ultimate (and therefore **ultimately dangerous** [my emphasis]) execution of the corrida's three traditional acts.'

The matador often has some inducements generally denied to combat troops or the mountaineers who face death - adulation and high earnings: perhaps 80 000 euros for killing two bulls (much more for El Juli, the most highly paid bullfighter ever, until the advent of even higher earners) and, as the matador starts his journey to the ring 'perhaps...admirers and autograph-hunters.' El Juli is exposed to danger, from two bulls, for just over half an hour to earn his 100 000 euros, or whatever it is he earns. Very, very infrequently, he's faced six bulls - just over an hour and a half in the ring. This is said to make exceptional demands on stamina. Bullfighting supporters are lost in admiration for someone who can not only face death but show such superhuman strength and stamina for an hour and a half. I'd strongly recommend an immersion in the history of coalmining, and the present of coal mining in some countries, as an antidote to these particular delusions, and other delusions of bullfighting apologists: an immersion which demands, however, compassionate imagination. Witnessing death in the bull-ring makes no demands on compassionate imagination at all, just the ability to keep your eyes open and look. To enter into the hidden lives and deaths of miners (who of course included women and children as well as men) does demand it.

My poem Mines is about child-labour in coal mines. It mentions the rock falls and explosions which have caused so many deaths and injuries, but there were other ways of dying horribly, such as drowning when the mine workings were flooded, or a fall to the bottom of the mine shaft when the cage fell uncontrollably. A very few statistics (for single incidents, not the total for the year) from an enormously long list: the 439 deaths at Senghenydd in Wales in 1913, the 290 deaths at Cilfynydd, the 388 deaths not far from here, near Barnsley in Yorkshire in 1866, and the 1 549 miners killed at Benxihu in China in 1942.

As for injuries, in mining as in bullfighting so much more numerous than the fatalities, it isn't obvious in the least that a horn wound in the leg is worse than the crushing of legs by a rock fall. And there's a very significant difference. An injured bull

fighter is taken out of the bull-ring in a minute or two and is immediately treated in the bull-ring infirmary. The crushed coal miner had, and still has, no such benefit. Even with modern equipment, reaching the miner after a rock fall may be very difficult and may take days, or may be impossible. A severely injured high-altitude mountaineer also faces a prolonged and agonizing wait for rescue and medical treatment, if rescue and medical treatment are practicable at all.

A L Kennedy, on bullfighting plazas: '...all first-class plazas have fully equipped and staffed operating theatres standing ready, next to the ring.'

On the evidence of this book, watching bullfights tends to do nothing for sensitivity, sensitivity to human suffering as well as animal suffering. The risk of distorted perspectives is an occupational hazard of pro-bullfighting writers, the gross distortion involved in singling out one group as especially fearless - and giving them adulation - whilst ignoring the vastly greater claims upon our attention of others.

To return to El Juli, and to return to the cheerful prose of A L Kennedy: 'He's seventeen [at the time of writing], has been dubbed 'the Mozart of Toreo' and is electrifying the corrida.' If there are any further editions of 'On Bullfighting,' she can feel free to use this comment of mine: 'A book about love, life, death, danger, glamour, youth, celebrity. She was thirty-four, at the time of writing, has been dubbed 'the prose stylist in the Salons of Toreo' and is electrifying the world of corrida propaganda.'

The unchallenged and uncriticized comparison with Mozart, who lived and died in poverty, a universal genius, is bland and gross at the same time, but to most bullfight supporters a bullfighter ranks much higher than a universal genius.

The healthy modern scepticism which, far from being dry and arid, has helped to reduce or even human and animal suffering in many ways, if not nearly enough, is completely absent. The book marks no advance on the primitive level of Hemingway's 'Death in the Afternoon.'

One aspect of the bullfight which should be subjected to very close examination, but isn't in this book, is the audience and its emotions. Emotions are far from being self-justifying. The congregation feels - or many of them feel - extreme emotion at the climax of the mass, when they believe that the bread and wine are transformed into the actual body and blood of Christ. This emotion becomes - cold word, but necessary - *problematic* if you think, as I do, that no such thing has happened, that although the emotion seems real, the event which is supposed to have inspired the emotion, transubstantiation, is non-existent. The emotions of the bullfighting audience (or bullfighting congregation) are genuinely felt, no doubt, but they are compromised, and fatally, by the moral objections to the act and by misinterpretation.

As just one example of misinterpretation, the bull after all is a herd animal. There are obvious difficulties in inferring the inner life of a bull from observation of its behaviour. A L Kennedy is very good on the behaviour of herd animals like bulls. What is very, very unlikely is that the bull is sharing any of the 'higher' experiences claimed by the bullfighter and the audience when the bullfight is going well, going well, that is, for the bullfighter and the audience. The bull's focus will be on the cape (if it were allowed to live for a little longer, it would learn and attack the man directly rather than follow the cape). This being the case, so many of the most intense passages in this book collapse. The higher emotions, the ecstasies claimed by bullfighting supporters turn out to be based on insecure foundations, on transcendental appearances, illusory appearances, rather than inner realities. As when, in connection with Ortega and bull - wounded, a few minutes before its death - she writes of '...something which is a celebration of this moment, these creatures, this breath, this fine time they are having together.'

She writes, 'Standing in the *medios*, the central area of the ring, Ponce removes his hat and slowly turns, holding it up for us. This will be our bull, he is giving us this death.' A death for the price of an entrance ticket costing a few euros! Such good value! These supreme experiences are remarkably cheap!

¡Afición - abolición!

Orson Welles: who changed his mind

Orson Welles, the film-maker, is one defender of bullfighting (and amateur bullfighter) who changed his mind.

Extracts from the transcript of his comments to Michael Parkinson in 1974 about bullfighting.

'...the fact is, it has become an industry which depends on its existence by the tourist trade. So it's become folkloric, and I hate anything which is folkloric. But I haven't turned against bullfighting because it needs a lot of Japanese in the front row to keep going, and it does. But I've turned against it for very much the same reason that my father, who was a great hunter, suddenly stopped hunting. He said, "I've killed enough animals and I'm ashamed of myself." I was a bad torero for awhile myself, and I've seen too many hundreds of bullfights, thousands of them, I suppose, and wasted a lot of my life ... I began to think that I've seen enough of those animals die.'

'...wasn't I living and dying second hand? Wasn't there something finally voyeuristic about it?..By the way, almost all Spanish intellectuals have been against bullfighting for the last 150 years. Lorca is one of the few Spanish intellectuals who ever approved of bullfighting. Was it a waste, waste, waste? you asked me. A waste because I wasn't doing anything ... what have I extracted from it that's of any value to anybody?'

Michael Portillo, speaker

I've been contacting agencies which have for hire Michael Portillo as a speaker. Included in the message is this:

Portillo as a speaker. Included in the message is this:

'I've recently contacted Michael Portillo in connection with his support for bullfighting. The time has come to publicize his support for this barbaric spectacle - for example, outside a venue when he comes to deliver a speech (I oppose action within the venue, for example, interruption of a speech, interference with freedom of speech and all action which is against the law.)'

Michael Portillo is a Conservative politician and is associated with the deservedly successful series 'Great British Railway Journeys' and 'Great Continental Railway Journeys.' I'm a Conservative voter and I've watched almost all the episodes of these railway series. I take issue with (I loathe completely) his support for bullfighting. I don't take issue with, or loathe, other aspects of his character and his work - although his work on the death penalty has been very flawed.

Some opponents of bullfighting

Robert Pittam

Robert is an artist whose work I admire very much (A discussion of his work is included, as supplementary material.) Here, he's writing about the campaign of one organization but the points he makes so well obviously apply to many others:

I believe your campaign against the bullrun is misguided, despite your honourable intentions.

The campaign against Pamplona - how to lose friends and alienate people

I think you are making a mountain for yourselves to climb by targeting a very large group of people who are not engaging in the brutality of bullfighting itself, but simply taking part in adrenaline-fuelled silliness in which only humans - of their own volition - risk serious harm. The aim of stopping this is probably unachievable, a drain on your resources, and may undermine your credibility with the same people - who may in fact be sympathetic to your anti-bullfight campaign.

Confession: I have been to Pamplona - I drank and danced a lot, and had one of the most memorable days and nights of my life. It was also the trigger for a decade of anti-bullfighting activity and writing: I never attended the bullfight (I saw one on tv in a cafe, and left in disgust) - being there drew my attention to the ultimate fate of the poor animals involved.

Pamplona is, and I think will continue to be, a magnet for young, adventurous people from all over the world; I would plead with you to use this as an opportunity to demonstrate, talk to, leaflet, etc to make sure these people NEVER attend the bullfight, and even join you in campaigning against it.

The bull-run and the corrido are not inseparable, by conflating the two, don't you make your task far greater, and the protection of the bulls further away than ever.

Pamplona aside - I would even go so far as to suggest that removing the cruelty from bullfighting (the lance, banderillas, swords and daggers - and the poor, terrified horses), rather trying to demolish the entire edifice, dramatically increases your timescale for success: meaning thousands less bulls face appalling suffering and agonising death...

Regards, Robert Pittam.

PH: I didn't decide to 'boycott' the bullfighting town of Arles. I went there, kicked up a fuss in the tourist offices and wrote anti-bullfighting messages in the bullfighting arena. I like the idea of bullfighting opponents descending on Pamplona. Pamplona isn't going to abolish bullfights until it has to, though. Until that time in the distant future, the Pamplona bull run is tainted. I know that if Robert ever visited Pamplona again during the Festival of San Fermin, he would engage in anti-bullfighting activity. This isn't true of the vast majority of people who attend the festival. They should stay away from the place. I congratulate The League against Cruel Sports for organizing a public campaign to persuade STA Travel to discontinue tours to the San Fermin Festival. The campaign was successful, as the League's Website explains,

<http://www.league.org.uk/news-and-opinion/press-releases/2014/july/charity-applauds-sta-for-terminating-trips-to-pamplona-bull-running-fiesta>

The page includes this as well:

'Joe Duckworth, Chief Executive of the League said: *"We commend STA Travel for acting on compassion and ceasing its support of this abhorrent bull running festival. It's just a shame that it took a public campaign, and that they are still to engage with us directly.*

"Bull running and bullfighting are sickeningly cruel and barbaric practices ..."

Bullfighting is a sickeningly cruel and barbaric practice. Bull running isn't.

There are places in Spain and Southern France (and South American bullfighting countries) which have the chance to attract a great many risk-takers and party-goers to their own town or city and away from Pamplona, to enjoy debauchery and riotous living without Pamplona's cruelty. Barcelona, with bullfighting now banned, is one possibility. Marseilles is another. The commercial-humanitarian opportunities are there.

The Art of Robert Pittam: Sea of Serenity

Robert Pittam's art can be seen on these Websites, with the understanding that no Website images can do justice to the paintings.

<http://www.watersidestives.com/painting-artist/robert-pittam/>

From the site:

'[his paintings show a] distinctive style in which the very diverse influences of his favourite painters Vermeer and Edward Hopper can be clearly seen. His still lifes have a dark intensity and richness in the Dutch tradition and yet his landscapes and figures draw upon the surreal and polished style of Hopper.'

<http://www.hicksgallery.co.uk/artist/robert-pittam/>

From the site:

'Greatly influenced by the work of Vermeer and Edward Hopper, I too aim for a certain quality of stillness in my pictures. The still-lives often include fishes and I believe that they are amongst the most interesting subjects in nature to study in paint. Possessing colour, pattern, reflectivity, perfectly evolved streamlined shapes and a three dimensional form to 'sculpt' in light and shade – they might also be read as metaphors for the sea itself.'

<http://www.innocentfineart.co.uk/art/robert-pittam/>

<http://www.robertpittam.co.uk/>

The moon's Sea of Serenity, like the other large, dark, basaltic plains which are the Seas of the Moon, is no ordinary sea and Robert Pittam's paintings of the life of the seas and objects from the sea or by the sea are no ordinary paintings, and certainly not derivative paintings. Although Vermeer and Hopper are influences, his individuality is obvious.

His still life paintings are still but seem permeated by lines of force. The paintings which show fish in pairs remind me of sources of electrical energy in pairs where the electric force between them is palpable - a highly-charged stillness. He has made very fruitful use of the series of paintings. A mathematical series often goes on to infinity and the series of paintings which pursue a theme, such as the theme of fish grouped with another fish or with other objects to do with the sea, suggest, if not infinity, something vast. The series to be found in his paintings indicates the inexhaustible interest of the subject.

The development of astronomy and geology and the study of evolutionary history enlarged our understanding and gave us a conception of vastly enlarged space and time. Robert Pittam's still life paintings are far from being exquisite miniatures - although their technique is superb. So, the fish he paints on a plate are far from limited beings, whose purposes are mainly culinary. To me, they suggest the living things which began their history about 530 million years ago, during the Cambrian explosion, the living things which began the vertebrate odyssey. But this reminds me of some non-scientific associations, such as the wine-dark sea of Homer, or, by a paradox, of dark and luminous seas.

I think that Robert Pittam points the way out of the impasse, or the dilemma, of realism and abstraction in art, or many forms of realism and abstraction. Both of these have disadvantages. How to choose between them? Robert Pittam has presented in many of his paintings to present elements which exhibit clear cut spatial relationships, for example, two fish at a short distance from each other. This is an art of clear-cut mensuration, unlike the messier, more informal world of a realistic painting in which there may be an abundance of elements without such clear mensuration. The placing of the elements in the visual plane is clearer and simpler than in most still life paintings, such as those of Cezanne. There seems to me to be a linkage with formal garden design, where the elements of the garden, such as hedges and beds, have a clarity of spatial organization which is very different from the more chaotic world of a naturalistic garden.

But the elements of a Robert Pittam still life, like the elements of formal planting, aren't abstract shapes, with clear-cut, regular forms, but objects with sensuous immediacy. They are pockets of naturalism carefully placed in an otherwise abstract composition. The paintings are composites, natural and artful, carefully designed, carefully measured, but without loss of the advantages of realism.

Some opponents of bullfighting: Links

The list below is very, very short and gives only a few sites. There are many interesting and important sites, ones which I appreciate very much, which I've studied carefully but which I haven't included in this list as yet. Anti-bullfighting work has become very, very extensive, varied and highly organized. I can't possibly do justice to it here.

I think it's important to see opponents of bullfighting - anti-bullfighting organizations and individual campaigners - as a *coalition*. We agree on the importance of opposing and ending bullfighting but we may disagree about other things - the particular arguments we use, the campaigning techniques we use or advocate, and other matters to do with animal welfare. So, some of the organizations and people I list below may not agree with everything on this page, or my other pages on bullfighting and animal welfare, or may strongly disagree in some cases.

British anti bullfighting organizations

British anti-bullfighting organizations

Fight Against Animal Cruelty in Europe
<http://www.faace.co.uk>

Spanish organizations

ADDA campaigns against all the main forms of animal cruelty:
www.addaong.org

The page on bullfighting, in English:

http://www.addaong.org/eng/que_7.html

It publishes an online journal, the Antibullfighting Tribune which is a very valuable source of information about developments in the bullfighting world and the movement to end it, in France, Portugal and the Latin American bullfighting countries as well as Spain.

<http://www.thebulltribune.org/>

Stop our Shame (In English and Spanish)
<http://www.stopourshame.com/>

Partido Animalista
<http://www.pacma.es/>

French organizations

Crac: Europe
<http://www.anticorrída.com/>

Alliance Anticorrída
<http://www.allianceanticorrída.fr/>

Other European organizations

CAS International (Comité Anti Stierenvechten (In English and Dutch / Flemish)
<http://www.cas-international.org/en/home/cas-international/>

SOS - Galgos
<http://www.sos-galgos.net/>

The site contains an account by Caroline Wagershauser of an anti-bullfighting conference in Geneva which took the form of a trial of the pro-bullfighting case:

<http://www.sos-galgos.net/2008-07-04/caroline-wagershauser-pacma-berichtet-vom-stierkampfprozess-in-genf.html>

Caroline Wagershauser includes a moving and harrowing account of the death of a bull, with legs injured, unable to rise, put to death in the end, as so often, with the descabello sword thrust into the spine, the subject of a film. It begins, 'The room was dark. On the screen appeared a bullfighting arena in which a blazing sun sank ...'

She includes an impressive account too of someone who used to be an aficionado but suddenly saw the cruelty of bullfighting: Antonio Moreno from Malaga. Aficionados, often people influenced, indoctrinated, by their background and upbringing, aren't necessarily aficionados for ever. From her account, which explains very well how the actions of the bull, trying to defend itself in this artificial situation, this impossible situation, fighting for his life, are used as evidence against the bull and in favour of the bullfighters:

Antonio Moreno 'comes from a family that are big supporters and defenders of the bullfighting tradition. At nine years old ... he could assign all the bulls to their origin, by reason of their morphology, coat colour, horn placing. He knew the names of the individual 'passes.' He knew the history of bullfighting and all the bullfighters. His father raised him in the belief that the bull was a wild beast, which he had to kill, because he wanted to harm the bullfighter. The bullfighter was the good guy, the hero. And the horse of the picador was good, and had to be defended against the evil bull. If a bull attacked the horse then the Picador's lance must thrust more firmly in the neck of the bull to protect the horse.

...

'Until, one day. Antonio in the meantime had become thirty years old - behind the red muleta a bull appeared, an animal he had never seen before, that he had never perceived as a sentient being. He got up, left the bullring and has now, after almost twenty years, never entered one again.

'Slowly, he began to get involved in animal welfare ... With his knowledge, energy and his ability to bring projects to a conclusion, he disarmed everyone taurino. These people felt uncomfortable in his presence, because not one of them stands up to his arguments with their own flimsy, threadbare arguments.'

The political process

Anyone working for legislative change in a democracy should have a rational, informed knowledge of the political process and one that is as comprehensive as possible. The site listed below gives invaluable insights into the political process in this country. Reading records of debates in the House of Commons - topics which have no linkage with animal welfare provide valuable information, as well as the ones with a linkage - will make it more likely that activists avoid wasting time unnecessarily and avoid counter-productive activities.
<http://www.theyworkforyou.com/>

