

Rompesuelas. Toro de la Vega 2015

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His name is Rompesuelas, he weighs approximately 640 kilograms, he has lived for 6 years in the pasture of the Heirs of his Excellency Mr Conde de la Corte and he will be speared to death next Tuesday, 15th September in the Tournament of the Toro de la Vega, which takes place in Tordesillas, if, as expected, he is unable to escape the arena called the “Field of Honour”, if one of the participants does not manage to kill him after chasing and harassing him on foot and horseback armed with long pointed spears. In the last 20 years, only two bulls have managed to escape unharmed.

The bull, who is made to leave his pen and stampede through the streets of the town full of people, runs terrified toward the open field and tries to find refuge wherever he can, until the exhaustion and the injuries inflicted upon him during the run cause him to collapse. Then a spear takes his last breath and a judge identifies the winner of a trophy that boasts the honour of executing a being that was full of life. For all the revision of the formal names in the prevailing Regulation since the CVIII (gentleman jockeys, the *torneantes* (participants), field of honour, defence, etc.),[1] we are talking about a bloody show that elicits disgust even among the fans of bullfights, and most certainly for an entire society in Spain that raises its voice more fiercely and energetically each year for the prohibition of that which is nothing more than unjustifiable brutality.

The values of XXI century society toward animals have changed. Yes, it can be said that such a thing that may have been acceptable during the Middle Ages today causes repulsion, and does not correlate with the moral progress that clearly recognises animals as beings that should not be abused, least of all for fun. There is nothing more to be said. There are many current public voices, and of well-known people, that protest against the celebration of this cruel festival each year. We would not tolerate executions in the public square today, on market day, in the presence of children, when this has been common all across the occidental world until well into the XIX century and even still is in certain oriental countries. These days, social awareness, cultural tradition and ultimately moral progress incorporate animals as the last line of defence of the most vulnerable.

The death of “Rompesuelas” was announced this year on the posters that promote the “Traditional, Famous and Only bullfight show of the “Toro de la Vega”. I have transcribed the wording of the poster, so it is worth taking a moment to consider what it refers to as *incredible courage*, on the part of the promoters of an act of violence legitimated against a bull,[2] that eats like all other mammals, and is a being endowed with sensibility and capable of feeling pain[3] equal to that felt by us humans.[4] He is killed in a brutal manner in the name of tradition, fame and the uniqueness of the show.

Tradition is not in itself a value, but only when it responds to an ethic that adapts to the changes experienced by culture and science, and for this reason the tradition-culture binomial does not mean an act (a regulation, a social habit, a ceremony, a ritual)

is immune to criticism, solely because it is invariably repeated.[5] In fact, the error is in considering, as affirmed by Robert Hall, that “culture is a monolith of totally fixed rules” that is outside a palpable reality, as is the moral progress of society, when in reality, “(any) culture is a mix of rules, opinions, laws (including some that conflict), and moral progress is a process of step by step changes”.[6]

In terms of the Fame alluded to by the second incentive of the supposed “festival” of Torsedillas, it cannot be denied that it is famous, but I doubt this is for good reason, and something about which the organisers and those that support the ritual celebration of harassing and bringing down of an animal disoriented by the clamour of armed and horse-mounted *torneantes* can be proud. Of course, this year associations with the seriousness and prestige of Humane Society International have launched a campaign collecting signatures to request that the authorities put an end to this celebration that is harmful to the whole of society, without overlooking the “*Rompe una lanza*” campaign, which is achieving widespread diffusion thanks to the force of PACMA.

Ultimately, it is clear that the show is unique - a reminder of an ancestral violence against a defenceless animal. But, for this reason, it must disappear as soon as possible.

In Sagunto this year, following fines and legal rulings from the highest courts, they have no longer set loose ducks into the sea, but rubber balls. For years now, goats have not been thrown from the bell tower of the Cazalilla de la Sierra, nor have the recruits of Guarrate beheaded roosters hanging in the town square with a blade. But our repertoire of bloody traditions against animals continues to be one of social shame, and reflects an enormous apathy on the part of successive governments that forget that the power of compassion for the weakest is an ethical and social value that results in benefits for all, without exceptions. In the upcoming religious festivals and celebrations of the summer,[7] including the *encierro*, 13 people have already died. I ask myself, which public policies sustain and justify shows of animal abuse – with something more than the risk of life for the citizens – and who are the citizens that want to keep sustaining such shows with their taxes? I most certainly do not.

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[1] [GIMÉNEZ-CANDELA, T., La aguja y la pica](#)

[2] [GIMÉNEZ-CANDELA, T., Ritos populares y violencia legítima](#), originally published 16th September 2008 in [publico.es](#) and now reproduced

[3] [GIMÉNEZ-CANDELA, T., Seres sintientes](#)

[4] [CAMPS I RABADÀ, J., La genética y la evolución confirman que los toros de lidia sienten dolor](#)

[5] [GIMÉNEZ-CANDELA, T., Tradición y Cultura crítica. A propósito del Toro de la Vega; Tradition and critical culture. About the Toro de la Vega](#)

[6] HALL, Robert T. 2014. "Justificación de una metodología de la ética aplicada. Una glosa sobre la casuística", in Hall, Robert y José Salvador Arellano (Coords.). *La Casuística: una metodología para la ética aplicada* (Mexico City. Fontamara/UAQ)106.

[7] [GIMÉNEZ-CANDELA, T., Santa crueldad](#)