

The aim of this work is to introduce Spanish *corrida de toros* in a broader cultural context and to underline its importance not only for Spain, but for the whole of modern society as well.

Whether this brutal tradition is justifiable in the 21st century or an anachronism that can no longer be tolerated has been widely debated; I have reached the conclusion that it is not only a justifiable tradition but also a meaningful tradition as well.

*Corrida de toros* with all its lack of restraint, spontaneity and genuineness represents the last ritual of western culture. It is a ritual of collective ecstasy that creates an antipole to an overly technological and excessively rational society. As a matter of fact, it even presents an ideal model for the relationship between man and animal, which is expressed by respect and honor. In modern society, such a model has disappeared. Either the animal is reduced to nothing but a thing and kept in cruel conditions or it is ridiculously put on a pedestal and becomes a member of the family. Historically a variety of people have been attracted by *corrida de toros*. They were and are fascinated by its sincerity and rawness, while at the same time they are intrigued by its mysteriousness. It has influenced a great number of Spanish and non-Spanish artists all over the world. Some perceive it romantically; others try to uncover hidden symbols and metaphors. Sexual metaphors and parallels are especially favorite and common. They stem from the ancient bull cult symbolizing sexuality and fertility.

There are a few theories which try to explain the meaning of *corrida* but it is difficult to say which is correct. *Fiesta brava*, as it is referred to in Spain, can be explained in different ways. It is a multilevel entity that is not easy to resolve or decode and it does not seem that there is only one explanation of its meaning.