

B.A. THESIS REVIEW

**Belén McKechnie Charle: Valle de los Caídos – a symbol of Franco’s legacy which has withstood Spain’s transition into democracy? The reception of national identity project through the onsite ethnography in Spain.
Prague: Faculty of Humanities, 87 pages.**

The thesis by Belén McKechnie Charle is based on her ethnographic research conducted on the site of General Francisco Franco’s régime monument Valle de los Caídos (Valley of the Fallen), nearby Madrid, in spring 2022.

The student herself decided to pursue the topic of her own academic interest and worked very independently on it, during both the research and writing process, at the same time having been open to my (her supervisor’s) comments and suggestions.

The aim of the thesis is “to understand the meanings that visitors of the Valley of the Fallen ascribe to the site today, and how these reflect the different collective memories regarding the Civil War and the Regime present in Spain today”, p. 3. The author herself spend a week in the field and conducted an onsite ethnographic research there, based on observations, interviews, notes and gathering the visual material. I do appreciate the student’s maturity and courage to undertake this kind of research on the level of B.A. studies. I must conclude that she managed very well, considering that she was not a total outsider there (she is half Spanish, which also let her conduct the research in the native language of the studied culture).

The author makes a theoretical background for her research based mostly on the literature devoted to the contemporary studies over collective memory in social sciences (Halbwachs, Nora, Earl, Boyer). It would be of a value to add some literature presenting similar research – both in terms of ethnography of monument sites and of empirically studying the shared experience of collective memory.

When it comes to the analytical part of the thesis, some data presented would require a deeper interpretation, with references to academic literature and published findings on similar subjects – for instance the issue of a national Spanish flag, described on the page 65. To sum up, data potential is not fully used by the author, while discussing the research findings.

The conclusion part of the thesis should include references to the theoretical frame of the thesis and put the research results within the broader discussion over the meaning-making practices in the post-dictatorial societies that underwent certain processes of democratization and emancipation.

Last but not least, the final argument by the author is that the monument is the same monument General Franco would like it to be, although the author also states that there are various meanings ascribed to the place by its visitors (from profound condemnation and sympathy, to total, declared indifference). How those two arguments go in line, and could the student base her answer using field data?

The thesis is written properly and meets all the formal requirements for a B.A. thesis. I evaluate it as well-written, based on a mature and interesting field research, therefore, I recommend the thesis for a defense and suggest the grade 1.

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