2. Defining values and significance: memory, commemoration and contested landscapes

Topography of terror or cultural heritage? The monuments of Franco's Spain

ALFREDO GONZÁLEZ-RUIBAL

On history and monuments

The Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) had an important impact on the landscape of Spain. The armed conflict and the subsequent dictatorship changed the face of the country, leaving deep scars in the shape of trenches, bombed out cities and villages, redundant fortifications, concentration camps and fascist monuments. Many features of this war landscape had remained forgotten and untouched until the building rush of the last ten years and the general upsurge in interest about the Civil War (González-Ruibal 2007).

During the last decade, there has been a growing debate in Spain over the management of the material legacy of the Franco dictatorship, which lasted from 1936 to the dictator's death in 1975. The policies developed by the socialist government from 2004 onwards have fuelled this debate. The Historical Memory Law (ley de la memoria histórica) was passed in 2007 by the Spanish government. It recognises the victims of political, religious and ideological violence on both sides of the Spanish Civil War and of the dictatorship of General Franco and promotes the moral restitution and recovery of their personal and family memory. Although these policies are not significantly different to those implemented in Germany, France or South Africa in relation to civil conflicts, they are creating a great social stir and are often portrayed as a biased attempt by a political party wilfully to rewrite history. It seems that active remembrance and commemoration is considered all very well in other countries and for other periods, but for the recent history of Spain it is expected that we must espouse oblivion (Tremlett 2006). This attitude is mostly a local phenomenon, but in recent years some foreign observers have adopted the conservative Spanish perspective, most notably *The New York Times* (Rothstein 2007; Kimmelman 2008), one of whose correspondents asserted that the new law (BOE 2007), passed to commemorate the victims of the Civil War and manage the monumental remains of the dictatorship, 'doesn't make much sense' (Kimmelman 2008).

According to Michael Kimmelman, 'over the years most of these [Francoist] monuments have already been carted off, making the law largely toothless and symbolic'. Even if it were true that the monuments have already been carted off, and it is far from true, would that justify letting the Francoist legacy stand as if it were simply another element of Spain's rich cultural heritage? Should we not at least qualify its message in some way? Kimmelman does not suggest anything of this sort. And neither do many Spaniards. The keyword is 'history': Franco's monuments are 'history' and, therefore, have to be preserved for posterity untouched.

But, what is and what is not history? Is history not also the ruins of concentration camps, battlefields and prisons, which can be found in many parts of the country? Many would accept that they are history, but a history that has to remain forgotten: 'let us not recall the things that divided us in the past and may still divide us in the present', they say. The idea is that we have to preserve things as they have come to us – buried if buried, alive if alive. What this way of thinking amounts to is that we ought to remember what the dictator wanted us to remember: his mausoleum, statues and triumphal arches, and to forget what the dictator wanted us to forget (or not to look at): prisons,

mass graves, and battlefields. After all, what people usually identify with as cultural heritage is the bright side of history: monuments, works of art and places of heroic deeds. Franco's buildings fit much better in this category than his repressive institutions.

A monumental silence?

Michael Kimmelman says that we have to ignore Franco's monuments and leave them to their own devices, because nobody talks about them anymore and nobody cares: they have been displaced from Spanish collective memory. As the enormous recent national interest in the Civil War proves, however, the remains of Francoism are anything but forgotten (Gálvez Biesca 2006; Richards 2006). Yet at the same time, it is true that there is 'a monumental silence', or at least a monumental uneasiness, regarding the remains of the war and Franco's past.

We should ask ourselves about this silence, instead of accepting it as something natural. As it is well known, silence belongs with dictatorship and is the product of fear and trauma – see Byrne (2007, 81–98) for a good example of an archaeological reading of a silenced landscape. Silence is enforced by physical and symbolic violence and contributes to protract and worsen trauma (Lister 1982; Herman 1997). When an individual goes through a terrible emotional shock, he or she often becomes mute. The same occurs with societies: usually, a generation has to pass after traumatic events, before they can be properly addressed.

Fig 2.1 The façade of the basilica of the Valley of the Fallen.
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In Spain, those who want to know about the past are the grandchildren of those who killed or were killed in the war – the generation that has no personal experience of dictatorship. Silence has dominated Spain until very recently due to the effectiveness of General Franco's repressive policies. Therefore, if we ignore and take for granted the material legacy of the dictatorship, we are complicit with its policies. In fact, by choosing the past that we want to remember, we decide the future that we wish to have. As massive landmarks, the sites of the Civil War and Francoism force us to take them into account and to rethink fundamental political values.

Here we will try to show how the material remains of Franco's dictatorship are (mis)managed and how a different approach could produce not only a different interpretation of the past, but also foster more democratic values. For this, two of the most important building projects of the immediate post-war period are examined: the Valley of the Fallen and Carabanchel Prison.

From the Valley of the Fallen to the Fallen in the Valley

The Valley of the Fallen [*El Valle de los Caídos*] is a large mausoleum, built by order of General Francisco Franco near Madrid for those who died in the Civil War, for the founder of the Falange, the Spanish fascist party (José Antonio Primo de Rivera), and for the general himself (Figure 2.1). Although the project started immediately after the war, using forced labour, the construction ended only in 1959, after several requests by the dictator to increase the size of the main building, a huge underground basilica larger than St Peter's in the Vatican (Monumento Nacional 1962; Sueiro 2006; Smith 2007). Around 40,000 individuals are buried in the basilica that constitutes the central architectural feature of the site.

Current defendants of the Valley, drawing on Franco's own statements, argue that the monument was meant to preserve the memory of those who died in the conflict, irrespective of their political affiliation. The reality is far from bipartisan: apart from the obvious fact that Franco is the most conspicuous individual buried at the site and that the representation of Republicans is negligible, everything about this memorial was conceived to exalt Franco's rule and the national-catholic principles on which the regime was based.

The architects resorted to a revival of Spanish Renaissance architecture, the style of the golden age of the Spanish empire, and this became fashionable all over the country. They drew inspiration from the nearby monastery of El Escorial, built by Philip II in the 16th century: the vision was to build Franco's memorial into part of the 'royal route' in the mountains near Madrid where El Escorial and the 18th century palace of La Granja are also located. It was a not very subtle way of trying to make the Francoist regime blend in, presenting it as a logical sequel to the reign of Spanish kings. Imperial emblems and religious references abound. Although the monument is mainly built in a neo-traditionalist style, there are also a number of modernist elements: they include the colossal scale of the buildings and sculptures and the style of the statues. Both show close connections with fascist aesthetics and ideology.

Today, the Valley of the Fallen site is part of what is called 'national heritage', a series of historical sites that used to belong to the kings of Spain. Important historical buildings are included, such as Madrid's 18th century Royal Palace. As part of the national heritage and due to its strategic location (the site commands wonderful views of Madrid), the Valley receives hundreds of thousands of visitors every year, both national and international.

There is not, however, a single sign that contextualises the place. A visit to the Valley today is no different to one that could have taken place in the 1960s (Smith 2007). It is not surprising therefore to find that extreme-right activists, nostalgists and members of the Falange gather at the site. For them it is a perfect, unchanged place that still fulfils its function of praising totalitarianism to perfection. One of the things that is brushed aside is the fact that the edifices were built by 6,000 political prisoners (Sueiro 1976).

With the Spanish government's new law about commemorating the victims of the Civil War and the dictatorship (BOE 2007), the Valley of the Fallen can no longer be kept as a monument to Francoism. According to the law, 'The foundation in charge of managing the Valley of the Fallen will include among its objectives to honour and rehabilitate the memory of all those who died as a consequence of the Civil War of 1936–1939 and the political repression that followed, with the purpose of increasing our knowledge of this historical period and the constitutional values. Besides, it will promote the aspirations of reconciliation and coexistence that exist in our society' (BOE 2007: 53414). Because the legislators were aiming to avoid confrontation, the law is very vague and does not help in finding solutions to issues such as the management of the Valley of the Fallen. How is one to promote 'aspirations of reconciliation and coexistence' in a fascist memorial?

In the view of the author the place has to be transformed drastically but intelligently and for that it is not necessary to alter its fabric. As has already been proposed, a museum should be installed inside the basilica (after removing Franco's remains), that tells the story of the monument and the terrible conditions in which it was erected.

Another crucial step for deconstructing the valley is undermining its monumentality. For this, the author proposes a twofold archaeological move: firstly, the monument has to be redefined in the landscape, detaching from being linked to the long-term royal and imperial history of Spain to the short-term history of war and dictatorship. Secondly, the history of the site itself has to be made clear, disclosing its real nature through the presentation of the archaeological remains associated with its construction.

With regard to the first point, the area of El Escorial was part of the front-line during the whole conflict. This has left an impressive amount of archaeological remains everywhere. In one of the municipalities around El Escorial, for example, 107 sites with evidence of war use have been recently recorded (Colectivo

Fig 2.2 Concrete-reinforced trenches from the Civil War in Fresnedillas de la Oliva, 16 km away from the Valley of the Fallen.
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Fig 2.3 Carabanchel prison in November 2007; it was built just after the Civil War by political prisoners of Franco's regime.
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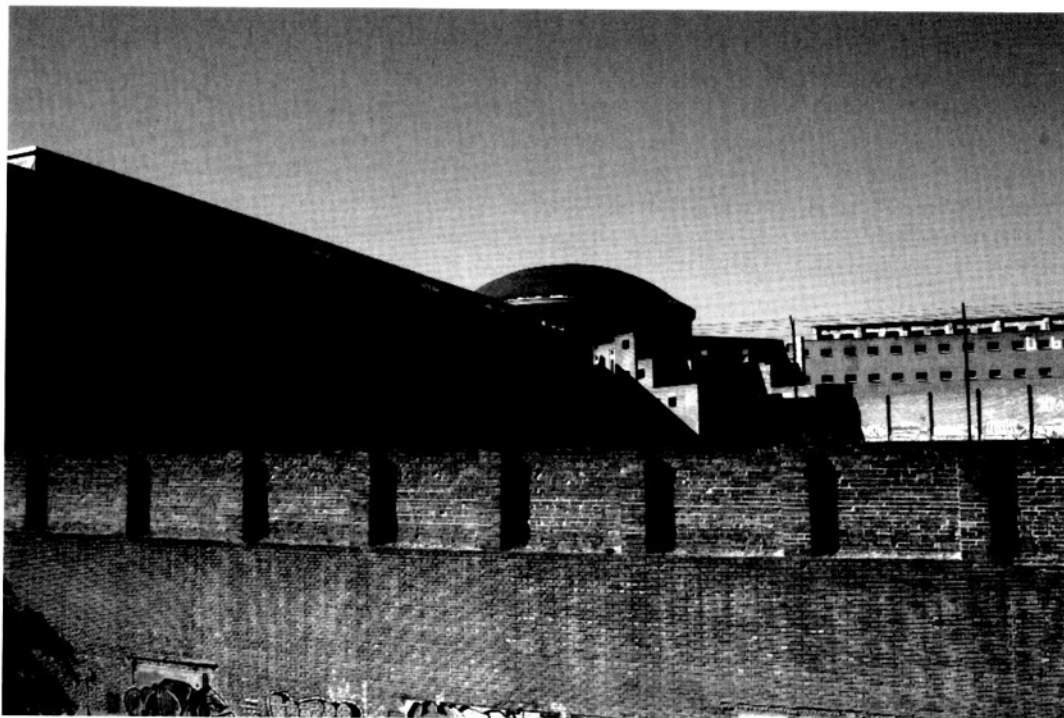
Guadarrama 2008) (Figure 2.2). Other municipalities have similar amounts of remains and several routes for visiting war sites in the area have been recently proposed (Arévalo 2007). War ruins allow us to challenge the epic image of the 'crusade' celebrated by Franco's monument, as they show the sordid and violent side of the conflict. The idea, then, is to remove the Valley from the national heritage list and include it in a topography of terror composed of war and post-war sites in Madrid.

In the Valley of the Fallen itself, the sites related to forced labour have to be identified, excavated and displayed, giving pre-eminence to those sites of suffering over the monument itself. With a group of colleagues, the author has been investigating a forced labour camp north of Madrid and we have discovered over 40 huts where the families of the inmates lived while their relatives served their sentences (Falquina et al forthcoming). Since women and children depended on men for their survival, they joined them in the camps and shared their fate. The archaeology evokes the terrible living conditions: people lived packed in tiny, unhealthy shacks, made with dry stone and covered with thatch. They slept on the floor, were malnourished, and suffered from extremely low temperatures during the winter. There is plenty of evidence for the existence of similar camps in the Valley of the Fallen (Lafuente 2002, 125-

–130; Sueiro 2006). The remains of those camps need to be located, excavated and displayed.

With this double strategy – excavating the labour camps and inserting the Valley into the war routes – the genealogy of the monument can be disentangled and the ideological constructions that distort its true nature can be thoroughly counteracted, thus preventing revisionist interpretations based on oblivion and the concealment of evidence.

From prison to agora

The other site that I would like to discuss is not, strictly speaking, a Francoist monument. It is rather an anti-monument: the prison of Carabanchel.

The prison was one of the biggest of its kind in Europe. It was built between 1940 and 1944 by 1,000 political prisoners, most of them members of the defeated Republican army or political parties (Díaz Cardiel 2007, 13). Like most other prisons built in Spain at that time, the structure followed the old-fashioned panopticon model (Johnston 1961, 319–320), which had mostly fallen into disuse elsewhere.

The immense cupola at the heart of the space was a powerful metaphor of the new totalitarian regime of surveillance that would characterise the post-war period (Figure 2.3). The site was an important place of political repression for the whole period of Franco's dictatorship. It was a

temporary detention centre for people that awaited other destinations torture was routinely carried out on the premises and people were executed by garrotte and firing squad there until the end of the Franco regime.

After the dictatorship, it became an ordinary prison until its closure in 1998, when the building was abandoned, without any plans for future use. The place is now degrading very fast, due to vandalism and systematic looting. Part of it has been occupied by illegal immigrants and drug addicts, and its walls have become a museum of graffiti.

The area where the prison was built was a former battlefield, associated with the Battle of Madrid (Reverte 2004). Carabanchel and Aluche were working-class neighbourhoods (or, rather, villages), south of the city, whose inhabitants were active politically in unions and leftist parties. It was precisely there where Franco's army was halted, after two months of crushing offensives in 1937. The stubborn defence put up by the militias, who fought house-to-house against Franco's well-trained colonial army, prevented the future dictator from entering Madrid for the remainder of the war. Instead, Carabanchel became a front-line for two and a half years and, as a result, almost half the buildings in the neighbourhood were destroyed (Sánchez Molledo 1998, 140).

Building the colossal prison in Carabanchel was undoubtedly a deliberate decision, a reprisal against the working classes and a permanent reminder of the dangers that awaited those who dared resist General Franco. The whole neighbourhood was rebuilt as a segregated working-class township, according to the totalitarian ideology of the time (Moreno 1983, 155–157). The streets were given the names of the generals that participated in the war against the Republic (Millán Astray, Romero Basart, Fanjul, Saliquet).

For the residents of Aluche and Carabanchel, the prison became an essential part of their lives and their history. It is perceived in this way today: many of those who live in the surrounding areas were imprisoned there, or have relatives and friends who were. Nowadays, Carabanchel Prison is a significant landmark in the collective memory of Spaniards.

The future of Carabanchel

Despite the historical and architectural relevance of the building, there are no plans for preserving it. The authorities want to reassess the use of the land where the prison stands and sell it to developers. The residents' associations reject this proposal and are asking for the land to be kept for public use; they want part of the prison to be preserved as a memorial to democracy. The residents' groups claim that the neighbourhoods have been traditionally marginalised and lack any place for socialising or public facilities. As one of the activists put it, 'this is a city without an agora'. The 17 hectares of land on which the prison stands and the institution's role in the cultural memory of the neighbourhood provide a great opportunity to create this commemorative space.

The authorities' abandonment of the building for a decade, however, has been deliberate. They want people to get tired of trying to preserve the building and simply approve any plan that will rid them of an increasingly dangerous ruin. The strategy, though, has not worked so far. On the contrary, the decaying of the building has been instrumental in mobilising the residents even more. They have organised demonstrations, public lectures, guided tours to the prison and exhibitions. They have recently proposed a comprehensive plan for redeveloping the area, which includes a hospital, a centre for senior citizens, an institution of higher education, a park and a democratic memorial in the prison's panopticon[1]. Although both the Spanish socialist government and the local right-wing authorities are ready to accept a hospital, they still insist in building private housing and tearing down the prison. As this text is revised for publication, in October 2008, the demolition of the prison seems imminent[2].

The author has been working with a research team from the Spanish Higher Council of Scientific Research (CSIC)[3], which is trying to assess the social relevance of the monument and to understand its place in the cultural memory of the neighbourhood – something akin to what British experts call 'characterisation' (Schofield 2005, 128–130). The author would like to elaborate a little on the possibilities offered by the prison as part of a topography of terror in Madrid. In the first place, as the residents suggest, it would be a good idea to protect the panopticon. Following similar projects elsewhere (for example, Strange and Kempa 2003; Corsane 2006), this structure could be transformed into a museum, where the history of the prison and, more generally, incarceration and political repression during Francoism are properly appraised.

Fig 2.4 Map of the Carabanchel Prison neighbourhood, with important war sites.
© Alfredo González-Ruibal
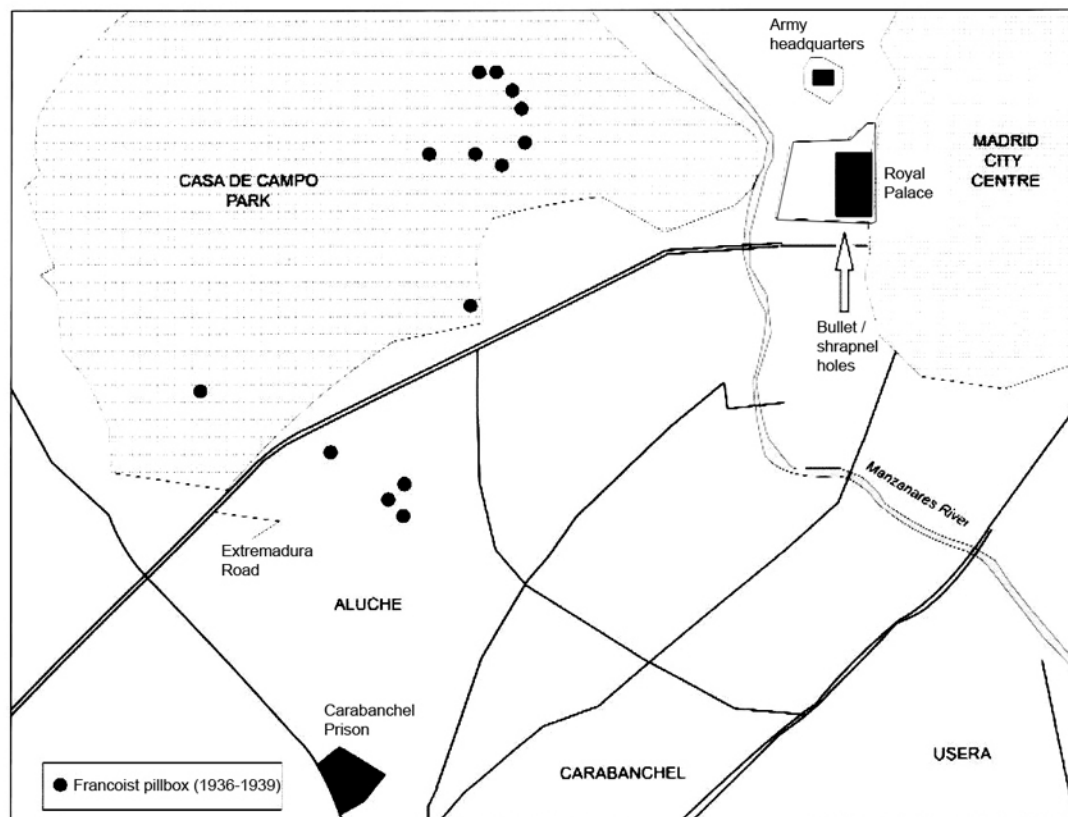
The museum, although focusing on the Francoist period, should also describe the terrible revolutionary violence in Madrid during the Civil War, that claimed the lives of thousands of people, many of them innocent civilians. After all, Carabanchel Prison is the successor to the Model Prison, which stood near the centre of Madrid. That institution, of which nothing remains, became infamous for the mass execution of its inmates by communists and anarchists in November and December 1936 (Reverte 2004, 241–244, 350–351).

As in the case of the Valley of the Fallen, the building should be understood as part of a particular landscape of conflict. Whereas Franco tried to insert the Valley of the Fallen into a historically-legitimised imperial route, Carabanchel Prison has fallen victim to an abolition of history. The prison was imposed, like a monster into the midst of a shattered neighbourhood – as a sort of divine punishment. Until recently, and still for many people today, the relationship between Francoism, the Civil War, and the prison is far from obvious. Mapping the specific connections between the prison and its surroundings enables us to grasp history in a direct, physical way.

The area surrounding the building bears the testimony of the Spanish Civil War in the guise of trenches and bunkers preserved in the nearby park of Casa de Campo (Castellano Ruiz de la Torre 2004, 230–238) (Figure 2.4). They belonged to the 16th and 18th divisions of the Francoist army, which besieged Madrid during the conflict, but were unable to conquer the city. From their positions in Casa de Campo, the Francoists shelled Madrid throughout the war killing and wounding hundreds of civilians. So far, no steps have been taken by the public authorities to preserve or display the remains of the war and they lie abandoned and ruined, just like the prison itself.

By linking together the prison, the battlefield and other local sites associated with war and repression in Madrid, a more critical understanding of the city's recent history can be achieved. This topography of terror should serve to foster a democratic counter-memory that overcomes oblivion and replaces the fascist history that the dictator bequeathed to us – a history that is still inscribed in the street names of Aluche and Carabanchel.

In a sense, what has been proposed here is to transform a monument into a ruin and a ruin into a monument, in order to produce a critical,

democratic reading of Spain's recent past. That is, the epic qualities of the Valley of the Fallen have to be deconstructed, by counteracting its monumentality with the ruins of the forced labour camps and the battlefields of the Civil War. On the contrary, the epic qualities of Carabanchel, as a centre where democracy was forged during the dictatorship, have to be enhanced and remembered through the construction of a memorial in the prison. In both cases, the sites have to be inserted into the wider context of the Civil War and Francoism, as part of a topography of terror (Braun 2002).

This, of course, is a proposal that will be disliked by some. Fredric Jameson said that 'history is what hurts' (Jameson 1981, 102). It seems that we are not fully aware of it and insist on producing sanitised, apolitical visions of the past. Yet there are historical experiences – especially recent ones – that cannot be reconciled. It is not possible to construct a narrative that pleases both the victim and the torturer. It is neither advisable nor ethically sound.

The problem of monuments that try too hard to conciliate has been pointed out by Koshar (2000, 258), in relation to the rhetoric of victimisation that emerged in Germany in the 1980s, which intended to honour all Germans as victims. A narrative that presents everybody as a victim or everybody as a perpetrator is politically irresponsible. As Hannah Arendt (2005, 87) wrote: 'Where everybody is guilty, nobody is; public confessions of collective guilt are the best defence against the discovery of culprits, and the magnitude of a crime is the best excuse to not do anything'.

A political attitude toward the past does not mean that we have to produce simplistic historical accounts in black and white. It actually means three things: first, extremely conciliatory memorials and historical displays have to be avoided because they are inherently unjust and promote a dangerous levelling of values; second, priority has to be given to truly democratic values, discourses and memories over all others; third, conflict cannot be crossed out from the remains of the recent past. As Dolff-Bonekämper (2002) remarks, 'there is no societal therapist who can help avoid unjust attacks while questioning the collective attributions of innocence, guilt, and responsibility'.

As time goes by, Spanish society will be able to face its negative past unhindered by Franco's shadow. Hopefully, at some point history and politics will no longer be regarded as things to be feared and shunned, but as an open field for endless discussion, based on widely shared democratic values. Historians, anthropologists and archaeologists have an important role to play in bringing forward a different past, one in which no justification is allowed for dictatorships of any kind.

Acknowledgements

Resumen

Durante la última década, ha habido un creciente debate en España sobre la gestión del legado material de la Guerra Civil y la dictadura (1936–1975). Este debate se ha generalizado a partir de las políticas desarro-lladas por el gobierno socialista a partir de marzo de 2004. Aunque estas políticas no son en esencia diferentes de las existentes en Alemania, Francia, Sudáfrica y otros países, están creando una gran controversia y se critican, sobre todo en España, pero también internacionalmente, como un intento sesgado de reescribir la historia por parte del gobierno. Mientras se defiende el recuerdo activo para otros países y períodos, se aboga por el olvido en el caso de España. En este trabajo se explora la naturaleza problemática del patrimonio franquista a través de dos ejemplos paradigmáticos y controvertidos, directamente relacionados con la guerra civil: el Valle de los Caídos y la prisión de Carabanchel, ambos en Madrid. El primero es un lugar de memoria fascista; el segundo, de lucha por la democracia. Sin embargo, el Valle es un monumento bien cuidado que recibe cientos de miles de visi-tas al año y el segundo una ruina en riesgo de desaparición. Trataré de demostrar aquí cómo se puede cambiar esta situación mediante la arqueología y producir una memoria diferente de la guerra y de la represión dictatorial.

Footnotes

[1] http://www.avaluche. com/spip.php?article415

[2] http://salvemoscarabanchel.blogspot.com/
Since the initial writing of this paper, despite protests from academics and local residents, the prison has been demolished

[3] Led by Dr Carmen Ortiz and funded by the FECYT

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