



Spain and the Old Regime of Post-truth

Freedom of Speech, Ritualised Politics, and Postmemory on Social Media

Raquel Campos Valverde, University of Leeds, United Kingdom, r.camposvalverde@leeds.ac.uk

The Spanish legal framework inherited from the Franco dictatorship (1939–75) and its recent development foster political dynamics that ordain it as an old regime of post-truth, where denialism of fascist history is the official truth. Through digital ethnography I demonstrate that this kind of post-truth is further amplified through digital platforms, although there is also room for countercultural practices of antifascist truth-making in Spanish digital media. The lack of freedom of speech and the ritualisation of political discussion can hinder democratic truth-making practices, but postmemory forms of engagement with digital media also offset the impact of denialist post-truth. The conclusion questions whether the democratic liminality of the Spanish public sphere online and offline provide a breeding ground for post-truth.



Introduction: Questioning Post-truth Theory

On 7 August 2020, the former vice-president of Spain, Pablo Iglesias from the social-democrat party *Unidas Podemos*, tweeted a comment about the TV political drama *The Plot Against America* (2020), tagging series' creator David Simon (Rubio Hancock 2020). Iglesias highlighted how timely the series was in relation to Trumpian politics, pointing out that “we often find the success of fascism inconceivable, but collaborationists are always close to us”. This seemingly mundane interaction generated several days of political discussions in Simon's feed, in which he extensively participated. His respondents quickly appeared divided between Spanish profascists and nationalists on one side, and antifascists and left-wing Catalan independentists on the other – a polarisation deeply familiar to Spanish Twitter users.¹ Tweets with wartime slogans such as the antifascist *No Pasarán* (“they will not pass”) and its fascist rebuttal *Pasaremos* (“we will pass”) proliferated on Simon's feed for days. This replication of previous political exchanges in the Spanish Twitter-sphere appeared to me as a sort of digital déjà-vu, reminding me of similar conversations that I had analysed in previous research on freedom of speech within the Spanish community in the UK. However, I was not able to find scholarship that explained this discursive replaying of defining fascism. Why are Spanish Twitter users repeatedly discussing the same ideas and wartime slogans? How are online post-truth practices related to these online conversations?

This article opens new directions for the analysis of post-truth by providing a historical approach to digital truth-making that is applicable to case studies such as Simon's episode above. While some scholars tend to treat post-truth as a relatively new phenomenon (Marshall & Drieschova 2020; Hannan 2018; Waisbord 2018; Suiter 2016), this article argues the existence of much older regimes of post-truth, understood as historical-legal practices of exclusionary nationalist denialism that continue to affect current political discourse and practice. Echoing previous research that criticises “truth politics” frameworks (Hetherington 2011; 2017) as ill-fitted to study frail democratic systems, and following scholarship advocating for the re-politicisation of truthness (Shirinian 2019), I aim to question the concept of post-truth itself. Highlighting Spanish politics as a specific case study, I show that post-truth is part of the historical construction of Western democracy where state and government can be the source

¹ I use the terms fascist and profascist to refer to far-right supporters of both historical and present forms of fascism. In comparison to broader terms such as right-wing (see the introduction to this special issue, Bareither, Harder & Eckhardt 2023), the concept of fascism provides a more apt terminology to refer to political activity and ideas based on anti-communism, white supremacy (although in a Spain-specific form here), and Holocaust denialism. This is because I am referring to the continued manifestation of right-wing ideology in Spain since the 1930s and to the continuity of individuals and social groups in power, more than to post-WWII democrat right-wing parties. The concept of Francoism refers to historical fascism specific to Spain between 1939 and 1975.

and defenders of an institutionalised, exclusionary nationalist reading of history that stems from the post-WWII period, and that existed as a kind of official alternative well before the Trumpian era of politics. Instead of looking at post-truth in social media as something linked to the development of internet technologies (Marres 2018) or as “discursive contortion” linked to a perceived rise of right-wing political discourse in recent years (Cabezas 2022), I argue that in the case of Spain, post-truth is a well-established institutional tradition of validating the historical revisionism of fascism and right-wing discourses via legal means that legitimise the illegitimate (Abrams [1977]1988). This article also sheds light on how truth is enacted and established in the Spanish context, providing a historical case study that analyses how this post-truth is contested through postmemory practices. Based on recent Spanish scholarship (Sanz Sabido, Price & Quílez 2016; Ferrándiz 2011; Ferrándiz & Baer 2008), I show how digital media such as Twitter (now rebranded as X) enable new forms of history transmission, remembrance and redressing of this historical post-truth for Spaniards in ways that address the narratives of the original conflict in the 1930s, the subsequent Francoist distortion of history, and the contemporary practices of post-truth by the far-right.

This paper contributes to the field of anthropology of fascism and white supremacy (Pasięka 2019; Beliso-De Jesús & Pierre 2019), providing case study data from online contexts. It shows how these forms of digital post-truth are not specific to the rise of nationalist communities online, but rather continuing white nationalist structures that underpin liberal and democratic systems. My analysis of dynamics of disinformation spreading and offsetting expands historical perspectives on the relationship between the development of democratisation in Europe and the establishment of new forms of populism and state control (Wodak 2020; Kalb 2009). It also provides online ethnographic evidence of the continued use of public performance in far-right propaganda (Virchow 2007). In doing so, it also expands studies of national resilience to online disinformation (Humprecht, Esser & Van Aelst 2020), using qualitative data from the Spanish online sphere.

Data and Methods

This paper is the result of two fieldwork periods: 2017–2019 and 2020–2021. The first fieldwork phase focused on a small group of Spanish participants living in London, mostly working migrants who arrived after 2011, with whom I had already established a relationship face-to-face and online for previous research on music and freedom of speech. My ethnographic engagement with this group included observation of social media habits of around 50 people aged 20–55 on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram, and WhatsApp, including the wider political context of the groups and

collectives that they joined and followed, and their mutual interactions online and offline. I also recorded interviews with a selected group of 13 people. The data collected during this period includes online material such as posts, screen captures, and conversations collected mostly from Twitter and Facebook. I also registered further impressions from in-person interactions in my field journal. All participants' names cited in this text are pseudonyms, and the sources of this material are anonymised by replacing images with text. All translations from the original data in Spanish are my own.

It is worth noting that this ethnographic engagement took place at a time of political polarisation: directly after the Brexit referendum in the UK, overlapping with the Catalan independence referendum in 2017, and coinciding with the rise of the Spanish far-right party Vox in 2018–19. The ethnographic material collected from 2020 onwards is the result of participant observation and monitoring of social media, focusing on the wider Spanish Twitter-sphere, without interaction with a selected group of participants, following established methods of everyday digital ethnography (Hine 2017; Knox & Geismar 2021; Postill 2017).

The first section contextualises the historical and legal context of post-truth in Spain, arguing that it is integral, and not adjacent, to the specific development of the Spanish contemporary democratic nation-state, and therefore to its constitution as an old regime of post-truth. The second section analyses how these dynamics of post-truth are normalised and further reproduced across the whole political spectrum through active propaganda and passive self-censorship, with a specific focus on the ritualisation of politics in online spaces. The third section investigates online contestation practices of postmemory and truth-making that counterbalance this reproduction of post-truth.

The Spanish Old Regime of Post-Truth: Historical and Legal Context

To understand contemporary post-truth practices in the Spanish context, it is first necessary to consider their historical background and relationship to the current legal framework on freedom of speech. The development of the Spanish democratic nation-state in the late 1970s is closely intertwined with its former status as a WWII-surviving fascist regime, based on nationalist Catholicism and endorsed by Western democracies, and to its rebuilding of the democratic government as the continuation of a fascist victory rather than its defeat. The transition towards democratisation enabled a legal framework establishing a frail democracy *de facto*, but still firmly rooted in liberticide state structures *de jure*. The democratisation process in post-dictatorial Spain provided a chance for the Francoist establishment to recycle itself into democrats (Ramos 2021), and to legally neutralise any aspirations of political freedom and accountability during the constituent process.

The post-dictatorial agreements of the Pact of Forgetting and the Amnesty Law of 1977, signed in a coalition including the socialist PSOE and the communist PCE, became the milestones for subsequent Spanish governments to enforce a particular version of history on Spanish society that had been officially endorsed since the 1940s (Aguilar Fernández 2002; Preston 2012). This included the dictatorship's evolution from "national crusade" to reconciliation, in which fascist policies and war crimes were, and still are, officially justified, pardoned, or forgotten. This legal framework institutionalised dictatorial and genocidal denialism, giving rise to a nation-state in permanent democratic liminality (Desfor Edles 1998). This liminality continues, rather than disrupts, Francoist criminal law. Most scholars consider the Spanish Transition successful but fraught, based on an anachronistic reliance on amnesty and amnesia (Aguilar Fernández 2002; Preston 2012). However, recent publications, such as by Ramos (2021), show that the minority perspective that analyses Spanish institutions as undemocratic or the Transition as incomplete, which I am arguing here, receives more attention. Yet, significant milestones such as the investigation of crimes against humanity by the Franco regime have been turned down in courts multiple times based on the Amnesty Law, most recently in September 2021 (Brunet 2021).

A focus on legal developments in Spain is relevant here because laws subsequently approved since 1977 further support this reading of history, rather than dismantling it. They restrict freedom of political expression and have been fuelling profascist post-truth since well before the advent of the internet. That is the case of the Decree-Law on Citizen Security 2/79 (Oliver Olmo 2015), which targets independentist political groups and press, exceptional anti-terrorist laws such as the Organic Law 1/92, and crimes such as "injury to the Crown" in Organic Law 10/1995. These laws limit civil society rights such as freedom of speech and freedom of the press, and target criticism of post-Francoist institutions such as the monarchy.²

In recent years even stricter laws have been approved on the grounds of national security, but their content mirrors Francoist legislation on freedom of speech and assembly rather than replicating the counter-terrorist laws of other Western countries. This is particularly true of Organic law 4/2015, popularly known as Gag Law (*Ley Mordaza*) (Bilbao Ubillós 2015; Oliver Olmo 2015; Revilla et al. 2015: 18; Pukallus 2015: 2), which is more specifically oriented towards online policing than previous legislation (Kassam 2015). It specifically punishes those who recirculate online content "that offends the State and its members" (Peinador 2017: 6) or criticise "the idea of Spain"

² The monarchy was reinstated in Spain by a decree where Franco named Juan Carlos I as successor and head of state in 1969.

(*ibid.*). This effectively seeks to punish the use of any physical or online public space for political demonstrations.

Although similar laws exist in other legal corpora such as the British (for instance the Treason Act of 1842), until recently these were rarely upheld against the exercise of human rights.³ At the same time, the denialist Spanish legal framework was slightly improved with the approval of 2007's Law of Memory (the first law to penalise crimes where fascism is promoted or endorsed), but this is rarely enforced. This legal culture of fascist denialism and restricted freedom of speech fosters a political culture in which fascism is actively promoted and glorified in the public sphere, while the defence of human rights is consistently punished. In practice, those who challenge the post-fascist establishment are paradoxically charged with hate speech crimes. The precarious situation of freedom of speech and expression in Spain has been reported by human rights organisations (Human Rights Watch 2015; Amnesty International 2017; Freemuse 2004) and by national and international academics (Pukallus 2015; Oliver Olmo 2015).

Within this history of state-sanctioned repression of democracy, and particularly based on the Gag Law (approved two years before the start of my fieldwork), worrying trials have become commonplace, reinforcing institutional post-truth about the dictatorship. Fines and prison sentences given to activists and citizens that criticise the Spanish state, or even joke about the fascist regime online abound. In 2021, an army sergeant received a disciplinary action for "statements about the pre-constitutional regime" (Militares Antifranquistas 2021). In 2017, the National Court (formerly the Francoist Public Order Court) gave a jail term to a university student for tweeting jokes about the death of the Francoist official Luis Carrero Blanco in 1973 (AFP 2017). The Gag Law has also been repeatedly used against artists, particularly Basque and Catalan ones (Peña-Lopez 2017: 10). In 2018, rapper César Strawberry received a prison sentence for "endorsement of hate crimes" and "incitement to terrorism" for tweeting in favour of former left-wing resistance groups (Cantor-Navas 2017). Rapper Valtonyc received a similar ruling for recording lyrics "inciting to terrorism" and constituting "grave injury to the Crown" (Loughrey 2018). In 2021, rapper Pablo Hasél entered prison after a series of court rulings that targeted his songwriting, political activism, and tweeting practices (Congostrina 2021). In 2016, two puppeteers were sentenced for "incitement to terrorism" (Reuters 2016) after a pantomime-style play that criticised police judicial farces, landlords, and the Spanish Catholic Church. Since the exceptionally restrictive

³ Since this article was first written, two new laws have been approved in the UK, worryingly making the British legal system closer to the Spanish one: the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Court Act (2022) and the Public Order Act (2023).

legal framework exposes citizens to new forms of political repression if they use digital media, the national culture of control and repression has easily expanded online, as critical theorists have warned (Morozov 2010; Fuchs 2012).

In contrast, there is a significant lack of rulings against crimes committed by members of the far-right, who enjoy official impunity. Francoist crimes cannot be taken to trial under Spanish law, and the glorification of fascism is rarely prosecuted. When social democratic governments have approved historical memory legislation (Hamilos 2007), right-wing governments have subsequently defunded it (Paradinas 2012) or successfully challenged it in court (Burnett 2008). At an ideological level, this ironclads the defence of the Franco regime by right-wing politicians (Eldiario.es 2021). At a practical level, it means that an annual cycle of far-right events in Spain is allowed (Ocaña 2021; Europa Press 2021), that the removal of fascist symbols is nearly impossible to enforce, their reinstatement in public spaces is allowed (Caballero 2021), and racist hate speech and abuse of authority are tolerated (Eldiario.es 2019).

Overall, Spain's historical and legal context enables the whitewashing of fascism and its nostalgia, and harshly represses any voices against it, in ways that are institutionally protected and endorsed as the official state discourse. Considering this evidence, I argue that the Spanish legal framework and even the existence itself of Spain as a nation-state in Western Europe are based on an old regime of post-truth, understood as a historical-legal practice of exclusionary nationalist denialism, supported by contemporary political action. While scholars of contemporary populism (Wodak 2020) focus on how far-right parties may re-imagine and rewrite their national histories to legitimise their present agenda, or to relive allegedly successful victories, the Spanish far-right can simply reiterate such victory and exploit the legal impunity established by it. In post-fascist countries such as Spain, the irrelevance of facts for political change (Hetherington 2011), the normalisation of fakeness (Shirinian 2019; Molé Liston 2020), and the conservatism of concepts such as post-truth (Nevado Encinas 2023) come to the fore. This is because the rewriting and distortion of history have been cornerstones of the institutional politics of the country since 1939, in ways that are rarely challenged internationally and thus passively endorsed by supra-national institutions. Fake democracies, rather than fake news are the issue at stake here (Fenton & Freedman 2017), meaning that post-truth practices are therefore an integral part of the political construction of democratic Western Europe in the twentieth century (cf. Udupa 2020). In this sense, the concept of post-truth (or the idea of fake news) does not provide any new conceptual tools to analyse contexts such as Spain; it only changes the language to discuss previously-existing problems. Moreover, it highlights the supposed erosion of a preceding historical period of truthness, but in the case of Spain this ideal

democratic period is hard to pinpoint. In other words, the concept of post-truth needs to be critically historicised and locally contextualised because in Spanish digital media, extremist content and hate speech continue, rather than disrupt, the political dynamics and practices of post-truth already present. In the words of Farkas and Schou (2020), the crisis of truth is actually “the crisis of a system that claims to be democratic, yet gradually has dispelled the elements that formerly made it so” (2020: 154). I would take this affirmation even further to say that in the case of Spain, post-truth discussions signal the crisis of a system that claims to be democratic, yet never established the formal elements to make it so.

Post-truth and its Normalisation

Given the social context explained above, it follows that this old regime of post-truth is perpetuated in digital media when offline political events are promoted or even reported via online platforms. Post-truth-making is thus based in the normalised social reproduction of the post-fascist regime. Since glorifying fascism is rarely prosecuted, overtly fascist content thrives in Spanish political media. This is even more evident in ethnographies of online media, as fascist content is algorithmically optimised by platforms that favour engagement with hate speech and so-called alternative history (Gilbert 2020).

In March 2021, Madrid’s conservative regional President Isabel Díaz Ayuso gave a television interview where she stated that “when [opponents] call you fascist you know you are doing it right [...] you are on the right side [...] on the right side of history” (El Mundo 2021). The video was promptly uploaded by major newspapers to either promote or criticise the statement, becoming a trending topic in social media platforms and giving it further exposure in Spain and abroad. In addition, it then became a subject of debate by far-right commentators on YouTube and Twitter. For instance, online pundits insisted that “she did not say that she was a fascist” (Rallo 2021) strictly speaking, and far-right websites highlighted that the term fascist “is used by the left to criticise anyone who does not agree with them” (Arias 2021). These online strategies allowed them to frame the episode as an example of cancel culture, rather than focusing on the exact words that claim that fascism is the right side of history. However, it is worth noting that Ayuso’s party Partido Popular (PP) is the contemporary iteration of the Spanish far-right par excellence, where most Francoist officials recycled themselves as democrats after 1975 (Ramos 2021). The newer far-right party Vox is a splitting of radicals from PP. Cabezas (2022) cites a similar example where Vox describes the feminist movement as “feminazis” and “gender dictatorship”, while the party itself has direct links with Francoism, Nazism, and contemporary far-right networks internationally. Since these parties do not distance themselves from this ideological and economic heritage,

their discourse is paradigmatic of the exploitation of this old regime of post-truth. As Venegas Ramos (2021) posits, in present-day Spain, political actions are legitimised by a distorted and spectacular reading of the violent, militarist, and nationalist past. These examples not only illustrate the normalisation and amplification of profascist content that Wodak (2020) warns about, they also show the symbiotic relationship between the Spanish old regime of post-truth and Breitbart-style⁴ new media practices.

Indeed, what is intrinsically new about how this old regime of post-truth is socially reproduced is that it generates digital-born practices that in turn feed everyday political debate. In other words, online post-truth in Spain is not simply a derivative product of the old regime of post-truth outlined above and its parliamentary politics, nor a “backstage” counterpart to political campaigning (Cabezas 2022: 325). It is an emergent form of post-truth making in and of itself. The far-right, whether represented by Partido Popular or Vox, uses social media to contribute to this form of fascist post-truth making, aptly profiting from the climate of impunity and avoiding any form of political or legal accountability. In 2021, far-right pundit Luis Alvisé Pérez – affiliated to UK LibDems in the past, then neocon liberals Ciudadanos in Spain, and now working for ultra-Catholic lobbies such as HazteOír/CitizenGo (Nieto Lorasque 2021) – threatened the Spanish State Prosecutor Dolores Delgado on Twitter with releasing information implicating her in an undefined corruption scandal, giving her a 48-hour deadline to resign. However, this was simply a defamatory threat followed by unsupported accusations of a case of sexual abuse, only used to build a narrative of socialist governmental corruption. It is worth noting that this tweet was not investigated under the Gag Law, despite being an exemplary case of the offences described within it.

This climate of post-truth impunity can also be observed in everyday online interactions at a microsocal level, as my fieldwork in 2017 revealed. For instance, in a Facebook group of Spaniards in London, a specific person would repeatedly threaten Catalan independentists in London with attacking them and their homes, going as far as suggesting “blood and fire” and “a Kristallnacht”, something that was tolerated by group admins as freedom of speech (Glaister 2017). These examples also show that in the Spanish political arena, post-truth is a vehicle for the far-right to continuously claim to be the only legitimate ruler of the country’s institutions and threaten those who challenge them. Once again, post-truth is the result of the combination of institutionalised denialism of fascism and the use of social media for individual forms of political antagonism, even across the physical borders of Spain.

⁴ Breitbart is a far-right American news network, notably involved in the online aggressive propaganda campaign that preceded the election of Trump.

Self-censorship

Such post-truth dynamics are intuitive to Spaniards to such an extent that these online practices are used for more than the endorsement of institutionalised denialism. Post-truth can often be reproduced by those who try to escape it and confront it, sometimes inadvertently. For example, the amplification of post-truth can simply happen by expelling others from digital spaces and thus limiting the reach of their discourses. Sue, a left-wing Galician living in London, did not identify herself as independentist. However, she withdrew from Facebook groups instead of confronting profascists:

These days I am not engaging with many Facebook pages because everybody is talking about the [Catalonian] independence, and it makes me sick. I mean, you can have your opinion, you can defend feeling Spanish [...] but there are right and wrong ways to do so. I have read such atrocities... it makes me think: well, Hitler and Franco are alive inside so many people here [in Spain] [...] So because I get scared away and don't talk, I am ignoring those pages. (Sue, September 2017)

These forms of self-censorship are even more evident when they are explicitly acknowledged by social media users. Fieldwork participants expected daily state surveillance and prosecution of their online activities, openly admitting to self-censoring their political opinions. As Elisabetta Costa (2016: 79) points out, in certain areas of the world with ongoing political conflicts, social media is understood as a conservative place, an online space of surveillance where people avoid confrontation. Extending Costa's argument, my fieldwork showed that the attitudes and behaviour of Spaniards on and towards social media, as well as their online political engagement, promoted self-censorship even beyond the borders of Spain as a country. For instance, Teresa admitted sometimes using Twitter to quickly share political opinions with friends, but often subsequently deleting tweets to avoid prosecution. One time I observed how she explicitly mentioned self-censorship when tweeting in response to a news piece about the queen of Spain with the text: "Ahem... I am going to self-censor again because if I said what I think I would complete two [university] degrees in prison" (Teresa, April 2017).

A second form of online self-censorship often appears in combination with a type of community policing in which a social media user warns others of the risks of expressing their opinions or political discontent. In the example below, participant Jasmin and a friend joked on Facebook about an accident that the former right-wing President Mariano Rajoy and another MP had in 2005, but Jasmin stopped the conversation:

J: Oh dear, why didn't that helicopter crash any harder?

F: Don't say that lol [laughing out loud]

J: Well, yes

F: The truth is that it would have hit two birds with one stone and incidentally it would have rendered a service to humanity, because they are so harmful lol.

J: We will go to pen[itentiary], shhh

On another occasion, a discussion about bullfighting in a Facebook group of Spaniards in London also ended with an explicit warning about the Spanish prosecution office:

Person A: When you say “true culture” you are not referring to torturing and murdering the bull, right?

Person B: I thought the ‘lol’ [in the original post] was enough to convey irony

Person C: I think the key is in the ‘lol’

Person D: Careful, the prosecution office is reading you

Person C: Hi your excellence [State prosecutor] Mr. Maza.

We say all this without malice.

These conversations directly address irony and the authorities, displaying the careful daily negotiation of what can be publicly said and how. These examples are also manifestations of how the old regime of post-truth controls the public sphere through fear and online surveillance, and thus continues previous fascist policies. In this respect, this fieldwork evidence confirms other studies showing that a lack of perceived internet freedom may undermine support for democracy (Stoycheff 2020), as users no longer trust the institutions that should uphold democracy.

Ritualisation

The historical and legal background and the online amplification of post-truth may partly explain the relationship between contemporary practices of post-truth and online public spheres. But these factors do not explain why there is a discursive replaying of defining fascism and democracy. The Spanish online mediascape is characterised by a ritualisation of politics, understood as sequences of symbolic acts based on the use of sacred objects that are repetitive in nature, whose consequences are also highly symbolic.

The opening vignette from August 2020 brings to the fore the repetitive nature of these exchanges (see **Figure 1**). When Pablo Iglesias⁵ tweeted about *The Plot Against*

⁵ Iglesias was at the time the leader of *Unidas Podemos*, a coalition of social-democrats, left-wing supporters, and grass-roots citizen groups that emerged after 2011, that used criticism of “the 78 regime” in their initial campaigns to stand as left-wing alternative to PSOE. At the time of writing this article, UP still governs in coalition with PSOE, and both parties have argued in favour of opening new paths to judge and investigate Francoist crimes and legacies at differing levels.

America (2020) hinting at the rise of fascism in contemporary USA and tagging David Simon (Rubio Hancock 2020) who was already Twitter-famous for his openly antifascist tweets, the discussion simply replicated previous conversations in the Spanish Twitter-sphere. Arguments reproduced previous Twitter flames and historical wartime slogans almost word for word.



Figure 1: Twitter conversation between Pablo Iglesias and David Simon with one of the responses using a wartime fascist slogan. August 7, 2020. The text in Spanish reads: "Seen 'The plot against America'.@AoDespair and Ed Burns never disappoint but the moment when the series has been released gives it a [more] special meaning." The tweet continues: "Sometimes the success of fascism seems inconceivable, yet their collaborationists are always very close [to us]."

But this episode was repetitive in more than one way. The exchanges were also remarkably similar to a previous online controversy in which Simon announced the development of a series on the Spanish Civil War back in 2018. Tweets also reused a handful of arguments that are central to the post-truth character of the Franco dictatorship: calling into question whether Franco was a dictator and mass murderer, if he created the Spanish welfare state, and whether Catalonians have historically been repressed. Reusing similar language and confirming the interpretation advanced above, these forms of digital post-truth seek to legitimise the dictatorship, its official narrative as winner of the conflict, and highlight the far-right as the only political group who can lawfully manage the Spanish state. This was noted by Simon himself (see **Figure 2**) as well as by some Spanish *tuitstars* (Twitter influencers) (see **Figure 3**), who observed that these discussions often replicate in their own Twitter timelines. In the screenshot in **Figure 3**, *tuitstar* @desselebrada warns Simon that profascists will next bring up a specific episode of the Spanish Civil War in which the republican army conducted extra-judicial executions of fascist insurgents.



Figure 2: David Simon's tweet, highlighting the lack of redress after Franco's death in response to one of his followers.

This discursive repetition in post-truth practices is so well-known by Spanish Twitter users that one person responded to Simon calling it “the twilight zone” to describe a public sphere turned into a non-place, where different political views argue through hyperbolic statements:

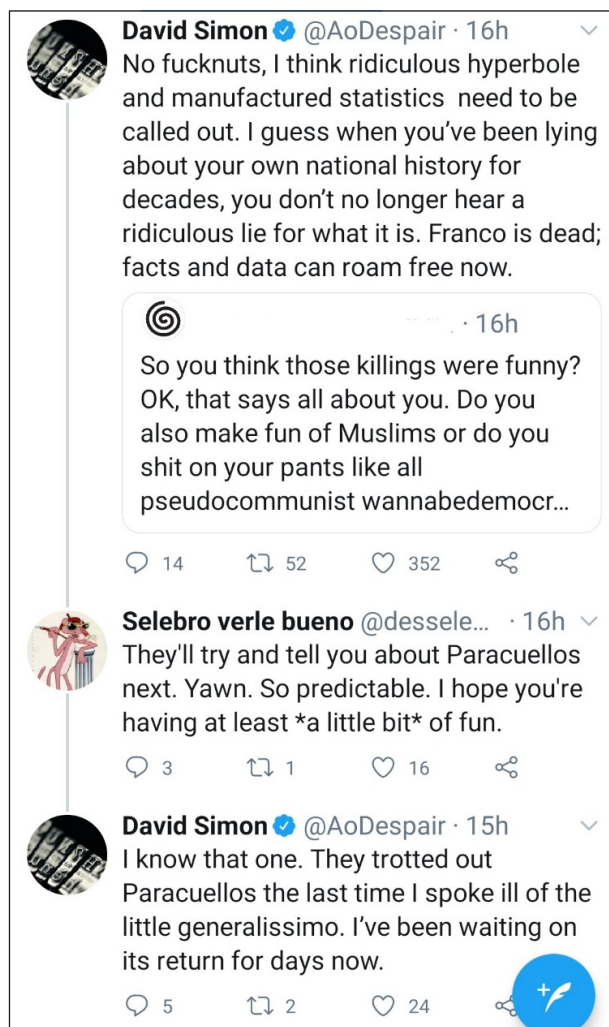


Figure 3: Twitter conversation between David Simon and a Spanish *tuitstar* about the repetitive nature of these online arguments about the dictatorship. August 10, 2020.

Suddenly you are in the Twilight Zone of right-wing Spanish Twitter, where the prevalence of non sequitur makes you doubt what you have written in the first place, only to be slightly outdone by tin foil hat-wearing separatists who will swear a Catalan invented the lightbulb. Enjoy your stay. (Tweet anonymised)

These political exchanges are also cyclical. This can be observed by looking at how the repetition of this fascist post-truth is confronted. Social media campaigns are often launched by the far-right at specific dates in the year, such as the anniversary of the death of Franco, or during election campaigns, to be then fact-checked by left-wing activists, and relaunched the following year again. For instance, in 2018 the Historical Memory Association of La Latina district of Madrid (@MESA_MH_LATINA 2018)

responded to a social media disinformation campaign from the far-right by tweeting a thread addressing 14 of the common myths about the Franco dictatorship in relation to the economic and social development of Spain, with evidence from historical sources such as law texts and archives. In 2021, the online activist group Spanish Revolution (@spanishrevorg 2021) tweeted an online video titled “Things that Franco didn’t do – even if they are constantly repeated online” on the anniversary of the coup. The video reinstated the content of the thread with a more social media-friendly format (see **Figure 4**). However, neither of these initiatives stopped the spread of the original disinformation campaign.



Figure 4: Tweet and video shared by Spanish Revolution, debunking the fascist disinformation campaign. July 18, 2021. The post reads: “On 18 July [1936] there was a military coup in this country. This video debunks all the fake news from the [defenders of fascist slogans] Arriba España [Up with Spain] and Alzamiento Nacional [National Uprising].”

Since political participation in Spain develops within the restrictive public sphere and legal framework mentioned above, post-truth practices result in self-feeding echo chambers: on one hand, profascists do not face consequential backlash, and on the other, anti-fascists are at best ignored or at worst silenced unless they avoid public surveillance. Indeed, in this legal context, fact-checking initiatives become cyclical endeavours that do not have political or judicial consequences: as if there was “no stable, verifiable reality – only an endless battle to define it, your ‘facts’ versus my ‘alternative facts’” (Farkas & Schou 2020: 72).

In addition to proving the repetitive and cyclical character of online political discourse, these episodes reveal crucial symbolic aspects of these post-truth practices, such as the ritualistic and liminal character of democracy and political discourse in Spain. Both the examples of lack of freedom of speech above and these Twitter exchanges can also be interpreted as the digital performance of an existing “democratic liminality” (Desfor Edles 1998) understood as a political “moment in and out of time” (1998: 41) based on a perceived “state of homogeneity” (1998: 45) or sacralised pacification. This “moment out of time” is what the Twitter user above called the Twilight Zone, a kind of liminal non-place where political discourse is on hold. As Desfor Edles argues, democracy in Spain was used as a sacred symbol of reconciliation during the liminal period of Transition and the 1977 inter-party pacts, permeating media language and eventually crystallising as an unconscious value of Spanish political discourse. In her interpretation, democracy in Spain is more an internalised moral code of reconciliation that structures cultural patterns of political ritual, mostly as an empty signifier (Laclau 2018) hollowed of political content, rather than a practical manifestation of ideology that places democratic practices in opposition to fascist ones. In other words, it is because the Spanish public sphere was rebuilt on this symbolic, sacred understanding of democracy that both sides repeatedly argue over what it means in practice: antifascist restitution or controlled pacification. Specific historical episodes of the dictatorship can be debated *ad infinitum* because Spain’s democratic structures were not founded on an explicit condemnation of fascism. Consequently, post-truth making in Spain is based on the historical exploitation of this empty signifier by the far-right.

While this symbolic call for democracy may have contributed to building political institutions during the Transition, my contention is that the lack of subsequent legislation to protect democratic political practice outlined above has led to a normalisation of this liminality. The examples above demonstrate that in Spanish social media the unconscious political fantasies of conflict and resolution continue to be performed in the same way that Desfor Edles shows for Transition-period printed media. As the David Simon episode shows and ethnographic observation of online micro social interactions supports, the ritualisation of the Spanish mediascape makes digital

media events work as post-truth prompts that “end up longing back to a glorified time of proclaimed consensus” (Farkas & Schou 2020: 155). However, in the Spanish case the “glorified time of consensus” (ibid.) is a sacralised, liminal transitional period that explicitly avoided defining the Franco regime as antidemocratic, and thus was a generator of post-truth by definition. These ritual post-truth events are thus performances of a sort of political impasse in truth-making. They do not really have consequences in the institutional political arena (nor do they constitute a network of activists or ideas that crystallises as a new social movement) and are oriented to carry out the Transition-era ritual of defining democracy, rather than to transcend or conclude it. In this sense, the above metaphor of the twilight zone as a cultural pattern of democratic liminality aptly summarises the kind of public sphere that is reproduced through these conversations: an ambiguous area where the ritualised, repetitive use of the word democracy as an empty signifier is the normalised form of post-truth and where the meaning of democracy can be bent to purport anything.

Truth-making as Contestation and Postmemory

Despite the evidence presented above, it would be unfair to say that the dynamics of this normalised post-truth do not allow for any forms of contestation, or that all activism is repressed. Digital media provide an arena for public sphere participation and for the contestation of Francoist narratives. Indeed, in Spain, truth-making practices are those that work to redress this normalised denialism. If profascist history is the official history, truth-making can be understood as an intrinsically countercultural practice.

The examples in the previous section of Twitter users responding to profascist statements in David Simon’s feed are part of these online practices of truth-making. I also witnessed other forms of digital truth-making at a microsocial level during my fieldwork. Research participants used new media as an alternative protest space outside institutional politics, and to create networks and alliances beyond the physical borders of the country. Participant Luisa, a social worker from Galicia, would often use Facebook (see **Figure 5**) to voice her opinions about the court cases against musicians, as did many other Spaniards.

These forms of digital contestation are even more evident in the online practices of journalists on Twitter. In **Figure 6**, journalist Antonio Maestre questions the coverage of the newspaper *El País* in August 2018, which misreported that there are no traces of the dictatorship in Spain’s current legal framework, specifically calling their reporting practices “post-truth” (*posverdad*).



Figure 5: Luisa's post on Facebook (anonymised) voicing her opinion about Valtonyc's court case.



Figure 6: Maestre's tweet defining an article from *El País* as post-truth. The post reads: "The editorial from El País saying that there are no legal traces of the dictatorship in our democracy is pure post-truth. Our mortgage law is from 1946, our State secret law is from 1968..."

As Manuel Castells (2012) describes, the distribution of alternative truths and narratives that challenge the reproduction of institutional post-truth can be indeed aided by new media technologies. Even in cases where these online practices are severely repressed, as in the rapper examples of the first section, a form of truth-making can arise as an unexpected consequence of repression. Alternative narratives to institutionalised denialism are often picked up and distributed by traditional media in Spain and abroad only once they have been punished. Valtonyc's case exemplifies this amplifying effect well. It is because the court decision was extreme that social media users such as Luisa mobilised to redress the narrative. Therefore, I argue that truth-making through these reactive practices of contestation is sometimes inadvertently revitalised to an extent by post-truth systems.

At a more macrosocial level, digital media enable important dynamics of postmemory for Spaniards, understood as “form(s) of memory acquired in the process of re-signifying the past [...] [through] the transmission, re-elaboration and representation of memory” (Sanz Sabido, Price & Quílez 2016: 6). As the previous sections have shown, in the Spanish context the struggle for truth-making is far from being merely a characteristic of new media and its contemporary use by the far-right. Instead, truth-making is first and foremost the struggle for memory, so expressing testimonies that have previously been silenced can be a counter-mechanism to offset the imposition of state-approved memories, or in this case, state-approved post-truths. The paramount examples of these digital postmemory practices are to be found in the online accounts of historical memory associations documented by Ferrándiz (2011; Ferrándiz & Baer 2008). The Asociación por la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica has a permanent call for testimonies of the war, including accounts from witnesses of war crimes that may be the basis of court cases in the future (see **Figure 7**). In addition to this ongoing work, the association often undertakes specific truth-making projects. In August 2020, the association requested the Real Academia Española, who officially manages the prescription of Spanish language, to change the official definition of *antifranquismo* to specifically describe Francoism as a dictatorship and not as a regime (see **Figure 8**).

This digital truth-making as a redressing of past narratives is not only a practice of associations or people involved in journalism or activism. In September 2018, a Twitter user tweeted in the typical style of journalistic accounts of Francoism to criticise how the Spanish Civil War is often presented as a conflict where both sides suffered in equal terms. The caption (in Spanish) reads “Herman and Jose fought in opposed sides [of the war] 80 years ago; Herman ended in a mass grave in Griñón [a town outside Madrid], Jose set up a construction company that flourished sheltered by Francoism and now is listed in IBEX35 [Spanish stock market].” With this kind of tweet, the user attacked the



Figure 7: Flyer from Asociación por la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, a non-profit organisation that works to recover testimonies of war in Spain, captured in 2020. The caption reads: “If you want to help us, click on ‘collaborate’” (currently hosted at memoriahistorica.org.es).

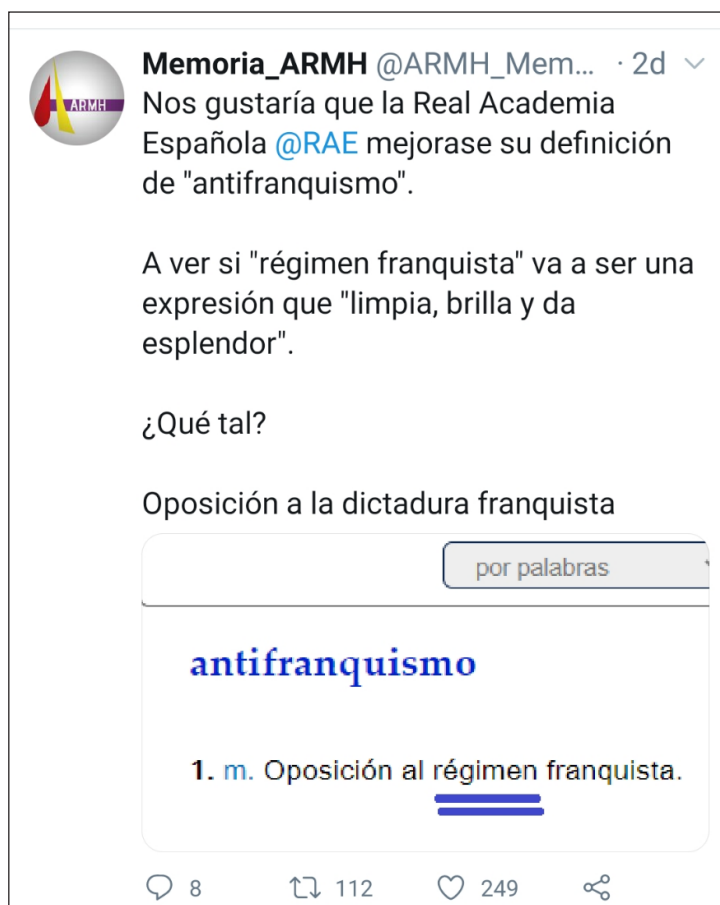


Figure 8: Tweet by Asociación por la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica about the campaign to change the definition of *antifranquismo*. August 13, 2020. The post reads: “We would like that the Royal Spanish Academy (@RAE) improve their definition of *antifranquismo*. Or is it that ‘Francoist regime’ is an expression that [as in RAE’s historical slogan] ‘cleans, shines and provides splendour’ [to the Spanish language]? What about: Opposition to Francoist dictatorship?”

fake neutrality claimed by some media outlets such as *El País* and their contributions to reproducing dictatorial post-truth. The user avoided directly accusing them and thus evaded prosecution.

In addition, through retelling family history, Spaniards also relive, relate to, and rewrite histories of international resistance to fascism and other democratic struggles as forms of “past presencing” (Macdonald 2013). In the tweet response in **Figure 9**, a user responds to journalist Olga Rodríguez’s account of the disappearance and assassination of her great grandfather, expressing how reading her account makes them feel the pain even without having witnessed the war. Indeed, for Spaniards that do not have direct memory of the conflict or the dictatorship, truth-making practices allow a transition “from collective memory to a broader form of cultural memory” (Sanz Sabido, Price & Quílez: 2016: 6), allowing them to situate their narratives within the context of other major historical episodes such as WWII and Holocaust, and to a broader defence of human rights (Ferrándiz 2011).

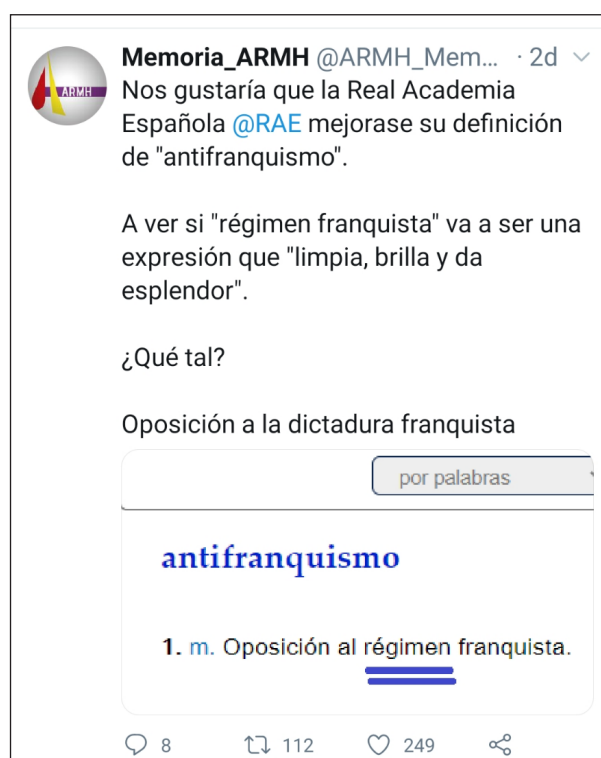


Figure 9: A tweet example of “past presencing”.

The campaigns of association Foro por la Memoria (see **Figure 10**) are directly targeted at this international recognition of war crimes in Spain in the same terms as other episodes of WWII. In the caption of the tweet in **Figure 10** the association tweets

in response to a court resolution in Barcelona, arguing that the judicial remedies are now exhausted, and that only a political initiative can revert the Amnesty Law, which favours Francoist criminals. The association here argues for a declaration of Francoism as a period that could be judged for crimes against humanity by international courts. In this example, truth-making practices take place simply by stating that political intervention can indeed redress the institutionalised post-truth.⁶



Figure 10: Foro por la Memoria's tweet concerning court resolutions. August 14, 2020. The caption reads: "We reiterate it: the judicial means are exhausted, at least since 2012. Persevering on it only entails dilapidating efforts and hopes. The only solution is political." The following tweet lists the necessary political steps to address this.

⁶ For a philosophical discussion on the futility of fact-checking initiatives in Spain, see Nevado Encinas (2023).

In all these examples, postmemory practices create, nurture, and assemble what Farkas and Schou call “genuine spaces for the enactment of politics proper” (Farkas & Schou 2020: 154) by “installing genuine ideas from the democratic tradition again” (Farkas & Schou 2020: 155), such as community-based political organisation, re-debating the national political consensus, online freedom of speech, and memorialisation and reconciliation after conflict. It is in this sense that I argue that online memory practices are digital forms of truth-making, because they not only seek to redress a narrative of the past or in the future, but they actively create new historical truths in real time.

Conclusion

To understand the relationship between contemporary post-truth practices and the online public sphere in Spain, this article highlights the continued existence of old regimes of post-truth, understood as an historical political practice of far-right denialism. The reproduction of post-truth stems from both old forms of this denialism enshrined by law, and its amplification via social media platforms where profacist narratives thrive. Ethnographic data also show that denialist post-truth is further reproduced by microsocial practices of self-censorship on social media. In addition, this article also explains why Spanish social media may seem to repeatedly discuss the same political question. I argue that post-truth in Spain is specifically based on a history of democratic liminality, where a symbolic use of democracy as an empty signifier is the backbone of ritualised political discussions, particularly observable on social media. Yet this apparent impasse in digital truth-making can sometimes be offset by memorialising and countercultural forms of challenging this normalised post-truth, providing a potential remedy for a broken public sphere. In the current climate of rising far-right power, it may be worth considering how old regimes of post-truth may facilitate the spread of these practices abroad, and how fighting disinformation must begin by confronting its historical roots.



References

Bibliography

- Abrams, Philip (1977)1988: Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State. *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1(1): 58–89. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6443.1988.tb00004.x>
- Aguilar Fernández, Paloma 2002: *Memory and Amnesia: The Role of the Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy*. New York: Berghahn Books. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.7079916>
- Bareither, Christoph, Alexander Harder & Dennis Eckhardt 2023: Special Issue: Digital Truth-Making: Anthropological Perspectives on Right-Wing Politics and Social Media in “Post-Truth” Societies. *Ethnologia Europaea* 53(2): 1–20. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/ee.9594>
- Beliso-De Jesús, Aisha & Jemima Pierre 2019: Special Section: Anthropology of White Supremacy. *American Anthropologist* 122(1): 65–75. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13351>
- Bilbao Ubillos, Juan María 2015: La llamada *Ley Mordaza*: La Ley Orgánica 4/2015 de Seguridad Ciudadana. *Teoría y Realidad Constitucional* [The gag law: Organic law 4/2015. Constitutional theory and reality] 36: 217–260. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5944/trc.36.2015.16083>
- Cabezas, Marta 2022: Silencing Feminism? Gender and the Rise of the Nationalist Far Right in Spain. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 47(2): 319–345. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/716858>
- Castells, Manuel 2012: *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Costa, Elisabetta 2016: *Social Media in Southeast Turkey: Love, Kinship and Politics*. London: UCL Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781910634547>
- Desfor Edles, Laura 1998: *Symbol and Ritual in the New Spain: The Transition to Democracy after Franco*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511557774>
- Farkas, Johan & Jannick Schou 2020: *Post-Truth, Fake News and Democracy: Mapping the Politics of Falsehood*. Oxon & New York: Routledge. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429317347>
- Fenton, Natalie & Des Freedman 2017: Fake Democracy, Bad News. In: Leo Panitch & Gregory Albo (eds.), *Rethinking Democracy*. Vol. 54. London: The Merlin Press, 130–149.
- Ferrándiz Martín, Francisco 2011: De las fosas comunes a los derechos humanos: El descubrimiento de las desapariciones forzadas en la España contemporánea. *Revista de Antropología Social* [From mass graves to human rights: The Discovery of forced disappearances in contemporary Spain. *Journal of Social Anthropology*] 19: 161–189.
- Ferrándiz, Francisco & Alejandro Baer 2008: Digital Memory: The Visual Recording of Mass Graves Exhumations in Contemporary Spain. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Sept., 9(3), Art. 35, <https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1152/2578>
- Fuchs, Christian 2012: Some Reflections on Manuel Castells’ Book *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*. *TripleC* 10(2): 775–797. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31269/triplec.v10i2.459>
- Hannan, Jason 2018: Trolling Ourselves to Death? Social Media and Post-truth Politics, *European Journal of Communication* 33(2): 214–226. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323118760323>

- Hetherington, Kregg 2011: *Guerrilla Auditors: The Politics of Transparency in Neoliberal Paraguay*. Durham & London: Duke University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822394266>
- Hine, Christine 2017: Digital Ethnography. In: B.S. Turner (ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Theory*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118430873.est0628>
- Humprecht, Edda, Frank Esser & Peter Van Aelst 2020: Resilience to Online Disinformation: A Framework for Cross-National Comparative Research. *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 25(3): 493–516. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161219900126>
- Kalb, Don 2009: Conversations with a Polish Populist: Tracing Hidden Histories of Globalization, Class, and Dispossession in Postsocialism (and beyond). *American Ethnologist* 36(2): 207–223. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1425.2009.01131.x>
- Knox, Hannah & Haidy Geismar 2021: *Digital Anthropology*. 2nd edition. London & New York: Routledge.
- Laclau, Ernesto 2018: *On Populist Reason*. London: Verso.
- Macdonald, Sharon 2013: *Memorylands. Heritage and Identity in Europe Today*. London: Routledge. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203553336>
- Marres, Noortje 2018: Why We Can't Have Our Facts Back. *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society*. Vol. 4. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17351/ests2018.188>
- Marshall, Hannah & Alena Drieschova 2018: Post-Truth Politics in the UK's Brexit Referendum. *New Perspectives* 26(3): 89–105. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2336825X1802600305>
- Molé Liston, Noelle 2020: *The Truth Society: Science, Disinformation, and Politics in Berlusconi's Italy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7591/cornell/9781501750786.001.0001>
- Morozov, Evgeny 2010: *The Net Delusion: How Not to Liberate the World*. London: Allen Lane.
- Nevado Encinas, Juan Luis 2023: La infundamentación teórica (¿ficción?) de los conceptos de “posverdad” y “Fake News”. La Historia habitada: Sujetos, procesos y retos de la historia contemporánea del siglo XXI: Actas del XV congreso de la Asociación de Historia contemporánea, [The unfunded theory (fiction?) of the concepts of post truth and fake news. Lived History: Subjects, processes and challenges of contemporary history in the 21st century: Proceedings of the XV Congress of the Contemporary History Association] Córdoba, del 9 al 11 de septiembre de 2021 (1715–1728). Universidad de Córdoba: UCO Press.
- Oliver Olmo, Pedro 2015: *Protesta Democrática y Democracia Antiprotesta*. [Democratic protest and antiprotest democracy]. Pamplona: Pamiela.
- Pasieka, Agnieszka 2019: Anthropology of the Far Right. *Anthropology Today* 35(1): 3–6, February. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.12480>
- Peinador, Minerva 2017: Invisibilización Legitimada: Censura en la España del siglo XXI [Legitimised invisibility: censorship in 21 century Spain]. Paper for XXXI *Forum Junge Romanistik: (Un)Sichtbarkeiten/(In)Visibilidades*, University of Rostock, Germany, March 5–7. Retrievable from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348578749_Invisibilizacion_Legitimada_Censura_en_la_Espana_del_siglo_XXI (accessed June 9, 2017).

Peña-Lopez, Ismael 2017: *State of the Art: Spain. Report of Collaborative Research Project "Voice or Chatter? Using a Structuration Framework Towards a Theory of ICTmediated Citizen Engagement"*. Barcelona: UOC.

Postill, John 2017: Remote Ethnography: Studying Culture from Afar. In: Larissa Hjorth, Heather Horst, Anne Galloway & Genevieve Bell (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Digital Ethnography*. New York: Routledge, 61–69.

Preston, Paul 2012: *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain*. London: Harper Press.

Ramos, Miquel 2021: *De los neocon a los neonazis: La derecha radical en el Estado español* [From neocon to neonazis: the radical right in the Spanish State]. Madrid: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung.

Revilla, Marisa, Anabel Garrido, Ignacio Martinez, Carlos Molina, Herico More & Karen Rodriguez 2015: Unexpected Consequences of Protest Actions: Ideological and Electoral Reconfiguration in Spain (2010–2014). Paper presented on the ESA Research Network 25: Social Movements Mid-Term Conference, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, February, 19–20.

Sanz Sabido, Ruth, Stuart Price & Laia Quílez 2016: The Spanish Civil War 80 Years on: Discourse, Memory and the Media – Introduction to the Special Issue. *Catalan Journal of Communication and Cultural Studies* 8(1), 1 April 2016, 3–9. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1386/cjcs.8.1.3_2

Shirinian, Tamar 2019: Fakeness: Digital Inauthenticity and Emergent Political Tactics in Armenia. *PoLAR* 42: 347–361. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/plar.12306>

Stoycheff, Elizabeth 2020: Relatively Democratic: How Perceived Internet Interference Shapes Attitudes about Democracy. *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 25(3): 390–406. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161220909741>

Suiter, Jane 2016: Post-truth Politics. *Political Insight* 7(3): 25–27. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2041905816680417>

Udupa, Sahana 2020: Decoloniality and Extreme Speech. Paper presented at the 65th e-seminar, Media Anthropology Network, European Association of Social Anthropologists, June 17–30, 2020.

Venegas Ramos, Alberto 2021: VOX y la memoria de España [VOX and the memory of Spain]. *LaU*, June 3. Available at: <https://la-u.org/vox-y-la-memoria-de-espana/> (accessed October 27, 2021).

Virchow, Fabian 2007: Performance, Ideology, Emotion: On the Creation of “Collectives of Emotion” and Worldview in the Contemporary German Far Right. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 36(2), 147–164. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241606298822>

Waisbord, Silvio 2018: Truth is What Happens to News. *Journalism Studies* 19(13): 1866–1878. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2018.1492881>

Wodak, Ruth 2020: *The Politics of Fear: The Shameless Normalization of Far-right Discourse*. London: Sage. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529739664>

Online Sources

Freemuse 2004: Censorship in Spain. *Freemuse*, January 28. Available at: <http://freemuse.org/archives/197> (accessed June 9, 2017).

Hetherington, Gregg 2017: The End of Truth Politics in Paraguay: First 100 Days. Available at: <https://first100days.stsprogram.org/2017/05/04/the-end-of-truth-politics-in-paraguay/> (accessed February 19, 2023).

@MESA_MH_LATINA 2018: Abrimos Hilo: No puedo evitar ver con tristeza [...] *Twitter*, August 29. Available at: https://twitter.com/mesa_mh_latina/status/1034823285912100871?lang=en (accessed October 27, 2021).

Militares Antifranquistas 2021: "Expte por falta grave, actual, incoado a un Sargento 1 de la Armada [Reported for grave infraction, 1st Sergeant of the Army]. *Twitter*, October 17. Available at: <https://twitter.com/militaresantifa/status/1449750912780623873> (accessed October 19, 2021).

Pukallus, Stefanie 2015: If the EU is serious about freedom of expression it should take aim at Spain's controversial "gag law". *LSE EUROPP Blog*, August 6. Retrievable at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2015/06/08/if-the-eu-is-serious-about-freedom-of-expression-it-should-take-aim-at-spains-controversial-gag-law/>

@spanishrevorg 2021: Un #18deJulio hubo un Golpe de Estado en este país [...] [On 18 July there was a coup in this country...]. *Twitter*, July 18. Available at: <https://twitter.com/spanishrevorg/status/1416718390207688707?lang=en> (accessed October 27, 2021).

Press

AFP 2017: Spanish Woman Given Jail Term for Tweeting Jokes about Franco-era Assassination, *The Guardian*, March 30. Available at: <https://bit.ly/35736gW> (accessed March 21, 2019).

Amnesty International Spain 2017: *Libertad de Expresión en España*, <https://www.es.amnesty.org/en-que-estamos/espana/libertad-de-expresion/> (accessed June 13, 2017).

Arias, Diana 2021: Ayuso a Ana Rosa: "Si la izquierda te llama fascista estas en el lado bueno de la historia" [Ayuso to Ana Rosa: if the left calls you fascist you are on the good side of history]. *OKDiario.com*, March 15. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3LOsJE0> (accessed October 20, 2021).

Brunet, José María 2021: El Constitucional cierra la puerta a investigar crímenes del franquismo [The Constitutional Court brings an end to investigating francoist crimes]. *El País*, September 29. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3By8wh4> (accessed February 20, 2022).

Burnett, Victoria 2008: Spanish Judge Drops Probe into Franco Atrocities. *The New York Times*, November 18. Available at: <https://nyti.ms/3GYUdmJ> (accessed February 20, 2022).

Caballero, Fatima 2021: El Ejecutivo de Almeida devuelve la calle a Millan Astray tras el fallo judicial [Almeida government reinstates Millan Astray street after court resolution]. *Eldiario.es*, August, 24. Available at: https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/ultima-hora-coronavirus-actualidad-politica-24-de-agosto_6_8241671_1076162.html (accessed October 19, 2021).

Cantor-Navas, Judy 2017: Spanish Rapper Cesar Strawberry Sentenced to Prison for Tweets. *Billboard*, January 19. Available at: <http://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/latin/7662300/cesar-strawberry-sentenced-prison-tweets-spanish-rapper-def-con-dos> (accessed March 21, 2019).

Congostrina, Alfonso 2021: Spanish Rapper Convicted over Tweets Arrested after Ignoring Prison Deadline. *El País*, February 16. Available at: <https://english.elpais.com/society/2021-02-16/spanish-rapper-convicted-over-tweets-arrested-after-ignoring-prison-deadline.html> (accessed October 13, 2021).

Eldiario.es 2021: VIDEO Ignacio Camuñas, exministro de Suarez y ex de Vox: “En 1936 no hubo un golpe de estado. La Republica fue la responsable de la Guerra Civil” [Ignacio Camunas, exministry with Suarez and ex VOX MP: “In 1936 there was no coup. The Republic was responsible for the Civil War”]. *Eldiario.es*, July 19. Available at: https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/ultima-hora-coronavirus-actualidad-politica-19-julio_6_8148216_1074500.html (accessed October 19, 2021).

Eldiariocyl 2019: Absueltos los guardias civiles juzgados por obligar a meterse balas en la boca y cantar el ‘Cara al sol’ en un bar de Leon [Absolved policemen judged for forcing people to put bullets in their mouths and singing ‘Cara al sol’ in a Leon bar]. *Eldiario.es*, March 12. Available at: https://www.eldiario.es/castilla-y-leon/absueltos-los-guardias-civiles-juzgados-por-obligar-a-meterse-balas-en-la-boca-y-cantar-el-cara-al-sol-en-un-bar-en-leon_1_1652030.html (accessed October 19, 2021).

Europa Press 2021: Un grupo de neonazis profirió proclamas antisemitas en un homenaje a la División Azul en Madrid: “El judío es el culpable” [A group of neonazis shouted antisemitic statements in a homage to Division Azul in Madrid: ‘The jew is responsible’]. *Eldiario.es*, February 15. Available at: https://www.eldiario.es/madrid/grupo-neonazis-profirio-proclamas-antisemitas-homenaje-division-azul-madrid-judio-culpable_1_7221908.html (accessed October 19, 2021).

Gilbert, David 2020: Facebook’s Algorithm Is ‘Actively Promoting’ Holocaust Denial Content. *Vice*, August 17. Available at: https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/z3e8aw/facebook-s-algorithm-is-actively-promoting-holocaust-denial-content (accessed August 18, 2020).

Glaister, Dan 2017: “Hunt for Catalans” Threat on London Spanish Facebook Group Page. *The Guardian*, October 7. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/07/london-spanish-threaten-violent-catalan-hunt> (accessed February 21, 2022).

Hamilos, Paul 2007: Spanish MPs to vote on law recognising Franco’s victims. *The Guardian*, October 11. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3ByZUH3> (accessed February 20, 2022).

Human Rights Watch 2015: *Spain: Reject Flawed Public Security Bill*. HRW website, March 9, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/03/09/spain-reject-flawed-public-security-bill> (accessed June 9, 2017).

Kassam, Ashifa 2015: Journalists take fight against Spanish “gag law” to European Court. *The Guardian*, December 15. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/15/journalists-take-fight-against-spanish-gag-law-to-european-court> (accessed June 7, 2017).

Loughrey, Clarisse 2018: Rapper Jailed for Three and a Half Years after Criticising Spanish Royal Family. *The Independent*, February 24. Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/rapper-jailed-lyrics-spanish-royal-family-valtonyc-josep-miquel-arenas-beltran-a8226421.html> (accessed February 27, 2018).

Nieto Lorasque, Ángel 2021: ¿Quién es Alvisé, el ciberazote de la izquierda? [Who is Alvisé, the cyberwhip of the left?]. *La Razon*, April 21. Available at: <https://www.larazon.es/espana/20210421/bmcz6xxddjcnxg7sfkzdogfu.html> (accessed February 17, 2023).

Ocaña, Juan 2021: Indignación por la conferencia sobre la División Azul en Albacete. [Outrage for the conference about Division Azul in Albacete]. *Eldiario.es*, October 13. Available at: https://www.eldiario.es/castilla-la-mancha/palabras-clave/indignacion-conferencia-division-azul-albacete_132_8391459.html (accessed October 19, 2021).

Paradinas, Marcos 2012: Rajoy cierra la Oficina de Víctimas como prometió en 2008: “Ni un solo euro para recuperar el pasado” [Rajoy closes the Victims Office as promised in 2008: “Not a single Euro to recover the past”]. *El Plural*, March 2. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3JwTOoy> (accessed February 20, 2022).

Reuters 2016: Spanish Judge Frees Puppeteers Jailed for Glorifying Terrorism. *The Guardian*, February 10. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/10/spanish-judge-frees-puppeteers-raul-garcia-alfonso-lazaro-basque-eta> (accessed October 13, 2021).

Rubio Hancock, Jaime 2020: The Weekend that the Creator of “The Wire” Spent Arguing with Twitter Users about Spain. *El País*, August 12. Available at: <https://english.elpais.com/verne/2020-08-12/the-weekend-that-the-creator-of-the-wire-spent-arguing-with-twitter-users-about-spain.html> (accessed September 28, 2021).

Videography

El Mundo 2021: Isabel Díaz Ayuso: “Cuando te llaman fascista es que lo estás haciendo bien” [When they call you fascist you are doing it right]. *YouTube*, March, 15. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h2AfC-62BB0> (accessed October 20, 2021).

Rallo, Juan Ramon 2021: ¿Ha reconocido Ayuso que es fascista? [Has Ayuso admitted that she is a fascist?]. *YouTube*, March 18. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZx4Uhq7Q68> (accessed February 21, 2022).

The Plot Against America (2020). HBO, released March 16.

Raquel Campos Valverde, PhD, is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Department of Media and Communication at the University of Leeds. Her current research focuses on Spanish digital cultures and music streaming. A recent publication is “Digital Platforms and Infrastructure in the Realm of Culture” (co-authored with David Hesmondhalgh, Bondy Kaye and Mabu Li) in *Media and Communication* 11(2), 2023. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v11i2.6422>

(r.camposvalverde@leeds.ac.uk)