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# BOTIFLERS AND BETRAYAL: HERALDIC SEMIOTICS AND THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF CATALONIA'S NATIONAL DAY

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The secessionist movement in Catalonia known as *el Procés* reached a climax in 2017 with an independence referendum in which over 90% of voters supported breaking away from Spain. The referendum was declared unconstitutional by the Spanish Constitutional Court, however, and the Catalan Parliament was dissolved soon thereafter. Key secessionist politicians and activists were imprisoned or exiled. Dell'Orto (quoted in Juarez Miro) posits that “dramatically escalating tensions” (xii) of the past decade have solidified “the construction of distinct, irreconcilable, even inimical identities” (xi) between Spaniards and Catalans. In a tense post-referendum climate in which Spanish and Catalan identities are perceived as divided (Oller et al. 11) and incompatible (Schnaudt, Walter, and Popa 164), and disagreements abound among pro-independence political parties, secessionist sympathizers wonder how best to move forward.

When attempting to measure independentist sentiment in the post-referendum context, some have looked to participation numbers in the annual celebration of Catalonia's National Day (*la Diada* in Catalan). Held on September 11, this day commemorates the anniversary of Catalonia's loss at the siege of Barcelona during the War of Spanish Succession in 1714 (Anguera, *L'onze de setembre* 19). Spanish / Catalan tensions date back to this loss, which resulted in the elimination of Catalan political, legal, and economic institutions and the imposition of the Castilian<sup>1</sup> language under Philip V, the French monarch ruling in Spain (Juarez Miro 4). These issues remain polemical to this day and are motivations for pursuing independence.

The foundation was laid for selecting September 11 as Catalonia's National Day around the turn of the 19th century. Catalan nationalist associations started leaving a wreath at the monument of Rafael Casanova to the tune of “Els Segadors”, the newly developed Catalan national anthem. During the September 11, 1901 iteration of this tradition, around two dozen young people were arrested for the act, provoking public outcry. Shortly after their release, there were calls for a public march and demonstration through the streets of Barcelona to continue the tradition of laying the wreath at Casanova's statue. Over 10,000 people participated, thereby “fixing the date of 11 September in the collective imagination as the most important anniversary in the history of the Principality” (Cattini 453). As part of the 2012 *Diada*, over a million Catalans held the largest pro-independence demonstration in the region's history. This was in response to a 2010 ruling from the Spanish Constitutional Court that declared parts of Catalonia's updated 2006 Statute of Autonomy to be unconstitutional, including all articles that defined Catalonia as a nation. The 2012 demonstration marked the first time that the Catalan government openly embraced secessionist claims (Juarez Miro 55).

In modern times, interested participants are bussed in for *la Diada* from many different areas for the main rally in Barcelona, Catalonia's capital. The key event is a march put on by the Catalan National Assembly (henceforth “ANC”) that starts precisely at 17:14 in the afternoon in homage to the year of the siege of Barcelona. The 2022 *Diada* was held just prior to the five year anniversary of the 2017 independence referendum. Participation estimates ranged from

150,000 – 700,000 depending on the reporting source. Many news outlets considered the former figure provided by Barcelona’s Guàrdia Urbana police force to be a gross underestimate. While these estimates were still far from peak numbers of around 1.8 million in the mid 2010s, the 2022 march proved that independence fervor is far from dead.

Catalan heraldic imagery abounds in *Diada* festivities. Participants also create an ephemeral linguistic landscape during the day with a proliferation of posters, banners, and graffiti. In order to analyze the sentiments of current independence supporters as regards *el Procés* and the best path forward, the author carried out an ethnographic study in which she participated in all of the day’s events in Barcelona. She documented 1,477 examples of heraldic emblems and signs<sup>3</sup> to answer the following research questions:

1. How are different variations of Catalan heraldry incorporated into the 2022 *Diada*, and what roles do they play?
2. What are the implications of key themes that appear in the LL of the 2022 *Diada*?



### Background: Catalan Heraldry

Important heraldic emblems are commonly used to manifest Catalan identity and secessionist sentiment. The earliest of these is the *senyera* (see fig. 1), known as the flag of the Catalan nation and culture, “the most pre-eminent of Catalan symbols” (Cattini 448), and a key emblem of Catalan identity (Anguera, *Les Quatre Barres* back cover).



Fig. 1. The *senyera*, hung from a balcony in *La Ciutat Vella*, Barcelona’s old town.

The *senyera* was adopted as the coat of arms for the Counts of Barcelona in the 12th century (Albertí 75), though theories and legends surrounding its origin date back to the 9th century. One common hypothesis is that the Aragonese dynasty was inspired by the red and yellow colors used in the Vatican’s papal bulls (Albertí 42). Another is that Ramon Berenguer III, a 12th century Count of Barcelona, incorporated the red and yellow bars as a salute to common shield designs from Provence, the homeland of his wife Douce I (Albertí 45–46).

The most repeated legend about its origin comes from the *Crónica general de España* by Valencian historian Pere Anton Beuter (ch. 13). It involves Wilfred the Hairy, who was the Count of Barcelona from 878–879. According to legend, Wilfred was wounded while fighting alongside Louis II of France against the Normans. He asked the king to give him arms for his shield. In response, the king touched Wilfred’s wound and traced four blood-stained lines across the golden shield, stating that this would be his coat of arms (Albertí 86–87). The veracity of this legend is questioned by scholars (Cattini 449). In the first volume of his *Heràldica catalana*, for example, Martí de Riquer shows it to be a largely plagiarized adaptation of a different legend (58). Despite being debunked, the story inspired writers and intellectuals during the 19th century Catalan *Renaixença*. They spread the legend and, in so doing, made the *senyera* “into a symbolic touchstone of the Catalan nationalist movement” (Cattini 450).

The dubious nature of this and other legends surrounding the origin of the *senyera* situate them as apt examples of Pastoreau’s *heraldique imaginaire*, which has as its object of study “coats of arms attributed to characters who never existed or who lived in times prior to the appearance of coats of arms” (261, author’s translation). In a sense, the veracity of an origin story is not the main priority in the dissemination of heraldic symbols, whose purpose is to serve as emblems worthy of pride. Indeed, Slater contends that Juan de Palafox redesigned the coat of arms of the Spanish Habsburgs in order to inspire awe while serving as the bishop of Puebla in Mexico (113). He posits a recursive idea that the power of the heraldic sign must reflect the majesty of the monarch, and in turn, the monarch can induce greater obedience with more majestic heraldry (125).

The majesty of the Spanish State’s coat of arms serves as an appropriate juxtaposition to Catalan heraldry, which intentionally rejects any monarchical family crest and tries to oppose itself in myriad ways to the central government.

In the early 20th century, a new flag was developed to reflect growing sentiment and organization surrounding the prospect of Catalan independence. After living through the Cuban victory against Spain, Vicenç Albert Ballester returned to Catalonia and designed the definitive version of this new flag in 1918. The *estelada* (see fig. 2), from the Catalan *estel* (star), contains a star design inspired by the Cuban flag that accompanies the *quadribarrada* pattern of the *senyera*. According to Albertí, “it is raised by those who defend the independence of Catalonia” (245, author’s translation). It is also known as the *estelada blava* (blue *estelada*).



Fig. 2. The *estelada*, carried during the ANC’s 2022 *Diada* march.

Another variation of the *estelada*, known as the *estelada vermella* (red *estelada*, see fig. 3), was developed by the Socialist Party of National Liberation (PSAN) in 1968. The colors of the star and triangle were changed to red and yellow, respectively, in order to highlight the radical leftist character of the party and the flag (Albertí 254). Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the *estelada vermella* has lost most of this leftist symbolism and now simply represents another version of the traditional *estelada* (Albertí 256). Still other variations of the *estelada* exist, such as the *estelada blaugrana* (blue and maroon *estelada*) seen in fig. 4, which displays the colors of the FC Barcelona football club.



Fig. 3. The *estelada vermella*, carried during the ANC’s 2022 *Diada* march.



Fig. 4. The *estelada blaugrana*, carried during the ANC’s 2022 *Diada* march.

To commemorate the tricentennial of *la Diada* in 2014, Jordi Avià and Joan-Marc Passada designed the *bandera negra* (black flag), as seen in fig. 5. The designers explained in an interview that this new pro-independence flag represents the “all-out political combat position” of *el Procés*, a “fight without truce” for separatist ideals (Rocalalva, author’s translation). Avià and Passada go on to describe, “The cross is the cross of *Santa Eulàlia* [co-patron saint of Barcelona], worn by soldiers in the War of Spanish Succession, and the star is that of the *estelada*” (Rocalalva, author’s translation).

The designers thus achieved a synthesis of the historical importance of 1714 and the Catalan independence project. In this way, the *bandera negra* further highlights the importance of Catalan folklore and cultural elements in their heraldry.



Fig. 5. The *bandera negra*, carried during the ANC's 2022 *Diada* march.

Finally, the *creu de Sant Jordi* or Saint George's cross (see fig. 6) was the official coat of arms for the Generalitat de Catalunya from its founding in the 14th century until 1714 (Albertí 57). It has always been a distinctive emblem for Barcelona, and remains a part of Barcelona's flag to this day. Though *Sant Jordi* is a figure of great importance in Catalonia, the flag bearing his cross did not evolve into a greater symbol of Catalan identity like the *senyera* because "historically, it became accredited only for the city of Barcelona" (Albertí 76, author's translation). Its relative frequency in this study's sample was small (N = 10), but its continued presence in *la Diada* speaks to its significance.



Fig. 6. The *creu de Sant Jordi*, carried during the ANC's 2022 *Diada* march.



### Theoretical Framework: Transgressive Discourse in The Public Sphere

The use of non-official language in the public sphere as a form of socio-political commentary dates back thousands of years. Newsome notes examples of illegally appropriating public space with non-official discourse as far back as the 4th century BC when Gnaeus Flavius published confidential details about legal procedures (71). He also describes pasquinades, poems and messages affixed to the Pasquino statue group in Rome from the 16th-21st centuries, as "attractive form[s] of social commentary" (65). Their placement in a busy, public space provided ample exposure for the messages, and the temporal element of posting messages at night provided anonymity for messages that were critical of authority.

Hillard discusses the role of graffiti in the Late Roman Republic, describing it as "the weapon of those politically less empowered in institutional terms" (115).

Many linguistic landscape (LL) scholars point to a seminal paper by Landry and Bourhis from 1997 as the work that solidified the LL as an important branch of sociolinguistic research. In their work, Landry and Bourhis maintain that the LL serves both informational and symbolic functions (25) and has a strong correlation with ethnolinguistic vitality (24). In the same year, Solé Camardons and Romaní Olivé published a paper on linguistic uses in commercial signage in Barcelona. Other early LL studies from Catalonia include Solé Camardons (1998), who examined how the language of commercial signage varied according to the type of structure signs were placed on, and Leprêtre Alemany and Romaní Olivé (2000), who investigated variation in the representation of Catalan in commercial signage across six different cities. As noted by Professor José Franco Rodríguez in a keynote address attended by the author at the *primer Congreso Internacional sobre Paisaje Lingüístico*, despite being published in the same year and highlighting similar assertions regarding how the LL may serve as an indicator of “la vigoria i l’ús social” of a language (58), Solé Camardons and Romaní Olivé’s 1997 paper has often been eschewed in favor of Landry and Bourhis’s publication when considering foundational studies of the discipline, for the mere reason that it was published in Catalan. Whereas the former has been cited fewer than 20 times as of the time of writing, the latter has been cited more than 3,400 times.

Per Landry and Bourhis’s classic definition, the LL includes public and commercial signage such as street signs, road signs, shop signs, and signs on government buildings. Since their 1997 publication, the definition of LL has evolved in ways that emphasize the wider social context (Gorter 3). For instance, Scollon and Scollon distinguish four LL discourses (167): *regulatory* and *infrastructural* artifacts are those produced by official bodies, *commercial* artifacts come from businesses, and *transgressive* artifacts are displayed by independent actors whose texts disrupt official discourse, similar to Newsome’s definition of *non-official* texts (67). The transgressive discourse present in the signage of *la Diada* is the appropriate focal point for the present study, as it represents the autonomous and creative expressions of the day’s participants.

Graffiti, in particular, has acquired an increasingly prominent role in LL scholarship. Backhaus describes

it as the most prominent type of transgressive discourse (*Linguistic Landscapes* 37). Blackwood and Tufi argue that graffiti can be seen more as an act of identity than transgression (11), with the representation of non-standard languages in graffiti increasing their legitimacy. In addition to establishing particular types of identity (Pennycook, “Spatial Narrations” 148), graffiti also reflects the cultural values of community members (Phillips 335). Moran calls on researchers to frame graffiti as the product of economic, social, and ideological factors in its surrounding environment (55). He further claims that graffiti serves as a faithful source of information for knowing about those who produce them (59). For this reason, graffiti is a valuable resource for examining the wider socio-political discourse of a community (Debras 460). This is particularly important in the politically tense context of present-day Catalonia (Byrne and Marcet 2).

As a result of two municipal ordinances that have criminalized graffiti and street art, Barcelona’s transgressive LL has shifted over the past 25 years from detailed and meticulously crafted artifacts to quick, ephemeral objects such as posters, stencils, and stickers (Vilaseca 18–20). Furthermore, much of the LL of *la Diada* is displayed on banners and posters because the day’s main event is a mobile march. Therefore, these objects will be the primary items of analysis in this investigation.

A major point of emphasis in the LL literature is how minority language signage indexes language ideologies (Hornsby and Vigers 57). Shohamy adds that the presence (or absence) of a language, “sends direct and indirect messages with regard to the centrality versus the marginality of certain languages in society” (10). As in other minority language contexts, the choice to speak in Catalan or Castilian in Catalonia is rarely arbitrary. Language choice in this nation has been described as “ideologically invested in a fundamental way” (Pujolar i Cos 247) and “a key symbol of ethnic identity” (Woolard 1). The ANC *Diada* march takes place in Barcelona, where there is traditionally a lower usage of Catalan than in the rest of Catalonia (Davidson 4). Given that Woolard has identified use of the Catalan language as the most legitimizing factor for claiming Catalan identity (40), language choice among Catalan, Castilian, and other languages in signage will be an additional focus.

With a focus on transgressive messages on a day of socio-political significance, the current research aims to add to the body of work that examines the LL in areas of ongoing conflict and social transformation. Seloni and Sarfati surveyed the LL of the Gezi Park protests, a series of demonstrations that erupted in opposition to an urban development plan for a park in Istanbul. They noted the role of graffiti as a tool to contend against an authoritarian government (23). Themistocleous offers an in-depth analysis of the LL of Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus and a crossing-point between the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot sides of the island. This border was finally opened in 2003, and she notes the strategic use of language choice to index varying voices and ideologies (18). In another study of interest, Byrne and Marcet examined the socio-political and socio-cultural meanings of semiotic resources in the LL of Girona shortly after the 2017 referendum. They noted graffiti’s role in promoting resistance, reclaiming public spaces, and reconstructing identity amidst the ongoing push for independence (20).



The Study: Data and Methodology

The survey area consisted of *El Barri Gòtic* (Barcelona’s Gothic Quarter), where a historical reenactment of the ending of the 1714 siege took place, followed by the ANC march route from *Avinguda Paral·lel* to *Parc de la Ciutadella*, and finally post-march festivities by the *Arc de Triomf*. The author traversed the entirety of the march route on foot. She started from the back of the crowd before the march began and continually moved forward through the marchers so as to capture artifacts displayed by as many unique participants as possible. All artifacts visible to the author that either included one of the heraldic emblems mentioned in Section 2 or contained a written message related to *la Diada* were photographed. In many cases, but not all, signs with written messages also incorporated heraldic imagery. Backhaus’s definition of a sign was endorsed for this study, that is, “any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame” (“Multilingualism in Tokyo” 55). In line with Blackwood and Tufi, this approach was deemed suitable for the large size of the corpus (12).

To interpret the data, a symbiotic approach was used that combined elements of both the qualitative and quantitative arms of LL research. Blackwood and Tufi contend this strategy is essential to take full advantage of the data available in the LL (7). Similar to Savela (35), all data were imported into Adobe Lightroom Classic, which offers a function to create and apply tags to each photograph. Tags were accordingly added for a number of factors for each artifact visible in the corpus of photos. These factors served as nominal variables for both the descriptive and the inferential statistical analysis. Table 1 presents the factors along with their associated factor levels.

Table 1  
Factors and Factor Levels Considered in the Statistical Analysis

Factor	Factor Levels
Type of Artifact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Flag</b></li> <li>• <b>Accessory</b> (bag, bag tag, food, megaphone, pin, ribbon, sticker, voting urn)</li> <li>• <b>Clothing</b> (t-shirt, handkerchief, hat, headband, bandana)</li> <li>• <b>Classic Signage</b> (banner, giant letters, graffiti, pamphlet, postcard, poster)</li> </ul>
Level of Anonymity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Anonymous</b>- an artifact not held by anyone, such as a flag hanging from a balcony or graffiti left without a tag or group label</li> <li>• <b>Identifiable, individual</b>- an artifact held or displayed by one individual, such as someone carrying a sign, walking with a flag, or wearing a backpack or shirt with a heraldic emblem</li> <li>• <b>Identifiable, group</b>- an artifact displayed by a group, such as members of an organization walking with a large banner or graffiti signed with an organization’s name</li> </ul>

Table 1 (continued)

Factor	Factor Levels
Heraldic Imagery Type (if present)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Senyera</i></li> <li>• <i>Estelada</i></li> <li>• <i>Estelada vermella</i></li> <li>• <i>Bandera negra</i></li> <li>• <b>Other</b></li> </ul>
Color(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes <b>yellow</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>red</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>blue</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>black and white</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>purple</b></li> <li>• <b>Other</b></li> </ul>
In addition to the above, for artifacts containing written messages:	
*Message	*Not a nominal variable; recorded and analyzed qualitatively to derive categorical themes present in signage
Language(s) of Message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Includes Catalan</b></li> <li>• <b>Includes Latin</b></li> <li>• <b>Includes Castilian</b></li> <li>• <b>Includes English</b></li> <li>• <b>Ambiguous</b> or includes <b>Other Languages</b></li> </ul>
Theme(s) of Message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes <b>Catalan cultural identity</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>independence</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>betrayal</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>feminism</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>socialism</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>repression</b></li> <li>• Includes <b>solidarity</b></li> <li>• <b>Other</b></li> </ul>

A qualitative content analysis was conducted “to identify themes, topics, or issues for systematic examination” (Ben Said and Kasanga 74). Potential factor levels for the “Theme” variable were derived inductively by analyzing the semantic material of each written message. Tags for potential themes were added to each photograph in Adobe Lightroom Classic. Categories emerged organically as semantically-similar tags were grouped together. This analysis was rooted in Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss), in that the themes developed out of “emergent categories (...) from successive levels of analysis” (Charmaz 155) instead of starting from preconceived hypotheses. By the third stage of analysis, these emergent categories had evolved into distinct themes based on conceptual patterns across the corpus. Each artifact was coded according to one or more of the finalized thematic tags (see Table 6 in the **Results and Discussion**). Signs that contained multiple themes were coded with multiple thematic tags so as to most accurately reflect the presence of that theme in the corpus. Stand-alone items that did not fit with any of the finalized themes were tagged as “Other”. While qualitative thematic discussions have been prevalent in recent LL scholarship (see, e.g., Debras; Byrne and Marcet), to the author’s knowledge, a systematic thematic coding of such a comprehensive corpus related to *la Diada* has not yet been attempted.

Upon completion of the coding process in Adobe Lightroom Classic, filters were run on the tags for relevant variables to find the necessary counts for various aspects of the quantitative analysis. First, the relative proportions of heraldic imagery types and signage languages and themes were calculated. Then, correlations of interest between key variables were assessed. Chi-squared tests with post-hoc pairwise comparisons in R (v4.2.2; R Core Team 2022) evaluated significant differences in the presence of certain types of heraldic imagery by the level of anonymity of the artifact, the type of artifact, and, in the case of signage, the thematic content. These relationships among heraldic symbols, level of anonymity, artifact types, and themes were examined closely to shed light on how different variations of Catalan heraldry are incorporated semiotically into the 2022 *Diada*, as well as what the principal themes of messages in the LL imply about Catalan socio-



political sentiment five years after the independence referendum. Another point of interest was how thematic content was integrated with other multimodal characteristics such as color. In this way, the data were treated as semiotic aggregates (Scollon and Scollon 12) or semiotic assemblages (Pennycook, “Linguistic Landscapes” 79). Below is a discussion of the results, where the choice of examples reflects the most salient data.



Results and Discussion

Upon careful examination of each photo in the corpus, 32 artifacts were excluded because it was determined that they were not created or displayed for *La Diada*. The 1,477 remaining artifacts form the sample of this study. Of these, 1,313 artifacts displayed a heraldic emblem, 629 included a written message, and 465 contained both. The first research question asks how different variations of Catalan heraldry are incorporated into the 2022 Diada, and what roles they play. Regarding the 1,313 artifacts that displayed heraldic emblems, Table 2 reveals a breakdown of the relative proportions of heraldic imagery types.

Table 2

Prevalence of heraldic imagery types in the corpus

Heraldic Imagery Type	Prevalence N (%)
<i>Estelada</i>	773 (58.9%)
<i>Bandera negra</i>	322 (24.5%)
<i>Estelada vermela</i>	81 (6.2%)
<i>Senyera</i>	69 (5.2%)
Other	68 (5.2%)
Total	1,313

Notably absent throughout *la Diada* was the Spanish flag. The author only documented one instance of it on an administrative building during the march. The 1988 Spanish “Flag Law” requires the presence of the Spanish flag on state, administrative, and military buildings. However, hundreds of Catalan municipalities have joined the “*una nació, una bandera*” (one nation, one flag) campaign over the past 30 years (Albertí 233). As a part of this campaign, the *Ajuntament* (City Hall) of participating municipalities raises only the *senyera* and not the Spanish flag on *la Diada*, “as the only symbol of our nation” (Albertí 233, author’s translation).

Of the 1,313 *Diada* artifacts that incorporated heraldic imagery, nearly 90% (N = 1,176) included either the *estelada*, the *bandera negra*, or the *estelada vermella*. As explained in Section 2, these three symbols have explicit connotations of support for secession in the collective consciousness. The *senyera*, on the other hand, is generally known as the flag of the Catalan culture and nation, and does not necessarily proclaim an express desire for Catalan statehood in the way the other heraldic types do. This finding speaks to the importance of displaying independence-oriented symbols in the 2022 *Diada*. This idea is further supported by various correlations that exist among the nominal variables presented in Table 1. For example, Table 3 shows the prevalence of heraldic imagery types by level of anonymity. For the sake of analytic relevance, the three independence-oriented symbols have been grouped together.

Table 3 in next page

Table 3

Prevalence of heraldic imagery types in the corpus by level of anonymity

Level of Anonymity	N (%) of <i>senyeres</i>	N (%) of independence-oriented heraldry ( <i>Estelada</i> , <i>estelada vermella</i> , or <i>bandera negra</i> )
Anonymous	36 (52.2%)	23 (2.0%)
Identifiable, individual	21 (30.4%)	1044 (88.8%)
Identifiable, group	12 (17.4%)	109 (9.3%)
Total	69	1,176

As seen in Table 3, over half of the *senyeres* present in the corpus were displayed anonymously, such as the *senyera* hanging from a balcony in fig. 1, whereas independence-oriented heraldry was overwhelmingly displayed by individuals or groups who knowingly presented themselves in public on a day with extensive media coverage alongside these symbols. When the “identifiable, group” and “identifiable, individual” factor levels are considered together, a chi-squared test in R confirms that the proportional mix of *senyeres* versus pro-independence heraldic types is significantly different between anonymous and identifiable artifacts ( $p < .0001$ ). In the non-anonymous acts of carrying a flag or holding a sign,

the data suggest that it is important to display some variation of the *estelada* or another independence flag in order to “belong” in the contemporary Diada. When considering flags alone, less than 0.3% of individuals carrying flags were carrying *senyeres*. Of 726 flags of the four types mentioned in Table 3 that were held by individuals in the corpus, only two were *senyeres*, and one of these was part of an FC Barcelona flag and had an *estelada blaugrana* directly below it (see fig. 4). The other 724 flags held by individuals were one of the independence-oriented variations. This is in stark contrast to a few decades prior, when images of la Diada were filled with *senyeres*. Figs. 7 and 8 exhibit this temporal contrast.



Fig. 7. A sea of *senyeres*, la Diada 1977 (photo source EFE/γv, reproduced from Albertí 222).



Fig. 8. A sea of *estelades*, la Diada 2022

In a similar way, there appears to be a greater preference for one heraldic type over others depend-

ding on the type of artifact. Table 4 shows a comparison of heraldic imagery prevalence by artifact type.

Table 4

Prevalence of heraldic imagery types in the corpus by artifact type

Artifact Type	N (%) of <i>senyeres</i>	N (%) of independence-oriented heraldry ( <i>Estelada, estelada vermella, or bandera negra</i> )
Flag	37 (53.6%)	754 (64.1%)
Clothing	13 (18.8%)	267 (22.7%)
Accessory	11 (15.9%)	32 (2.7%)
Classic Signage	8 (11.6%)	123 (10.5%)
Total	69	1,176

Table 4 shows that independence-oriented heraldry is relatively lower in accessories than in other artifact types, which is not the case for the *senyera*. A chi-squared test with post-hoc pairwise comparisons confirms that the proportional mix between *senyeres* and independence-oriented heraldic emblems is only significantly different in artifact type pairs that include accessories. The respective p-values obtained from comparing the mix of the two heraldic categories between flags and accessories, clothing and accessories, and classic signage and accessories are  $p < .0001$ ,  $p < .0001$ , and  $p = .00214$ . In contrast, the proportional mixes between the two kinds of heraldry are statistically similar when comparing flags with clothing ( $p > .999$ ), flags with classic signage ( $p = .838$ ), and clothing with classic signage ( $p = .838$ ). A potential interpretation of this finding is that *Diada* participants may feel that independence-oriented heraldry is more important for acts directly connected to the body, such as wearing clothes and holding a flag or sign, whereas the *senyera* is more appropriate

for accessories that typically are one or more levels removed from the body. For example, the *senyera*-topped cheesecake in fig. 9 was made for *la Diada* and sold near the march route. However, the object itself was unrelated to the march, suggesting that this was a more appropriate context for an emblem that is not explicitly pro-independence.



Fig. 9. Cheesecake topped with *senyeres*

The second research question asks what implications can be drawn from the key themes that appear in the LL of the 2022 *Diada*. There were 629 artifacts in the sample that included a written message. In addition to the classic signage formats listed in Table 1, written messages also appeared on less conventional LL artifact types such as bags, voting urns, and ribbons. Table 5 shows which languages were most frequent in signage documented

by the author. Table 6 shows a breakdown of the most common themes from signage, both overall and, in cases where signs incorporated heraldic imagery, according to a dichotomy of *senyera* versus independence-oriented heraldry. All languages and themes that applied to a message were coded. As such, the percentages shown reflect artifacts that at least included the languages and themes listed, even if others were also present.

Table 5

Prevalence of languages used in artifacts with written message from the corpus

Language	Prevalence N (%)
Includes Catalan	594 (94.4%)
Includes Latin	23 (3.7%)
Includes Castilian	17 (2.7%)
Includes English	12 (1.9%)
Other Languages / Ambiguous	4 (0.6%)

Table 6

Prevalence of themes expressed in artifacts from the corpus with written messages

Theme	N (%) of all signs that express theme <sup>5</sup>	N (%) of signs with <i>senyeres</i> that express theme	N (%) of signs with independence-oriented heraldry that express theme
Includes Independence	488 (77.6%)	7 (36.8%)	384 (91.0%)
Includes Betrayal	62 (9.9%)	2 (10.5%)	8 (1.9%)

Table 6 (continued)

Theme	N (%) of all signs that express theme	N (%) of signs with <i>senyeres</i> that express theme	N (%) of signs with independence-oriented heraldry that express theme
Includes Solidarity	30 (4.8%)	0	13 (3.1%)
Includes Catalan Cultural Identity	26 (4.1%)	9 (47.4%)	6 (1.4%)
Includes Repression	24 (3.8%)	1 (5.3%)	2 (0.5%)
Includes Feminism	11 (1.7%)	0	6 (1.4%)
Includes Socialism	6 (1.0%)	0	2 (0.5%)
Other	2 (0.3%)	0	1 (0.2%)

As can be seen in Table 5, Catalan was unsurprisingly the dominant language in the written landscape, used in over 94% of artifacts. Castilian was only seen in three unique artifacts, two produced by participants from the Canary Islands, where Catalan is not spoken. In fact, there were more artifacts written in Latin than in Castilian. The author’s examination of the soundscape of *la Diada* estimates Castilian usage in conversations to be around 20%, suggesting that it is more acceptable in the oral modality, but might cause judgment in written artifacts.

Regarding the thematic analysis, Table 6 shows that the ongoing fight for **Independence** was the most dominant theme. The ANC’s official motto for the 2022 *Diada* was “*Tornem-hi per vèncer: Independència*”. (Let’s come back to win: Independence). This motto appeared on banners, T-shirts, bags, stickers, and other merchandise (see figs. 10–12), and was accompanied by a white and black version of the *estelada*. Chromatically, official rally merchandise resembles the *bandera negra*, which further projects pro-independence sentiment and conveys the idea of fighting without compromise until **Independence** is achieved.



Fig. 10. Bag, “*Tornem-hi per vèncer: Independència*” (Let’s come back to win: Independence).



Fig. 11. T-Shirt, “*Tornem-hi per vèncer: Independència*” (Let’s come back to win: Independence).



Fig. 12. Banner, “*Tornem-hi per vèncer: Independència*” (Let’s come back to win: Independence).

The latin motto “*Donec perficiam*” (Until I succeed) was also present throughout the LL. This phrase was the motto of the Catalan Royal Guard during the War of Spanish Succession, and similarly conveys the *bandera negra*’s message of no surrender. Fig. 13 shows this message incorporated into the *República Catalana* flag. This new flag has *senyeres* in the four corners of its design and proclaims that the Catalan Republic was founded on the date of the independence referendum (October 1st, 2017). “*Donec Perficiam*”, shown in detail in fig. 14, appears on this flag surrounded by the design of the *bandera negra* (an independence star and the cross of *Santa Eulàlia*). Fig. 15 shows a fusion of the *bandera negra* and the *República catalana* flag. The incorporation of the *senyera*, the *bandera negra*, and the star of the *estelada* into the new *República Catalana* flag shows the importance of honoring past heraldic emblems in modern semiotic displays of support for **Independence**. The *senyera* in particular serves as a reminder that the existence of a unique Catalan identity and nation, separate from Spain, is a principal motivator in the **Independence** struggle.



Fig. 13. *República catalana* flag.



Fig. 14. Detail of “*Donec perficiam*” (Until I succeed) from the *República catalana* flag.



Fig. 15. Fusion of the *bandera negra* and the *República catalana* flag.

The presence of a woman on the *República catalana* flag is also noteworthy. Some **Independence** messages appeared alongside messages of support for **Feminism** (see, e.g., figs. 16 and 17). Both artifacts incorporate an *estelada*<sup>6</sup> indicating that part of the platform for promoting an independent Catalan Republic involves greater support for women’s equality. Additionally, a star, whose semiotic link to **Independence** was established with the creation of the *estelada*, appears at the bottom of fig. 16 and inside the female gender symbol in fig. 17. A chromatic semiotic element in fig. 17 is the use of the color purple, the color of women’s equality. Over a third of the artifacts that include **Feminist** thematic content incorporate the color purple, and 100% of the artifacts that have **Feminism** as their exclusive thematic focus do so. The use of purple is significantly higher in **Feminist** artifacts than in artifacts related to other themes ( $p < .0001$ ). The conflict between borders and identity also appears in

in fig. 16. Though the bulk of the Catalan Countries<sup>7</sup> lie within French and Spanish borders, Catalan national identity does not adhere to these borders.



Fig. 16. “Ni França ni Espanya: Països Catalans. Independència, Socialisme, Feminisme” (Neither France nor Spain: Catalan Countries. Independence, Socialism, Feminism).



Fig. 17. “Construïm la república feminista” (Let’s build the feminist republic).

Another principal theme in the LL of the 2022 *Diada* was **Betrayal**. Of note, these messages were generally not directed primarily against the Spanish state, but rather toward the pro-independence politicians whom Catalan secessionists had elected to represent their interests. Essentially, pro-independence voters are fed up with politicians who promised to fight for independence, yet appear to be compromising too much with the Spanish State at the *taula de diàleg* (negotiation table). As stated on one poster, “Aragonès<sup>8</sup> (ERC)<sup>9</sup> no us vam votar per fer una taula de rendició. Mentiders i covards, traidors al poble” (Aragonès [ERC] we didn’t vote for you to convene a negotiation table. Liars and cowards, traitors to the people). Dozens of other artifacts also criticized key pro-independence parties and their leaders of being cowards and abandoning the populace who had bolstered their political success (see, e.g., figs. 18–20).

Use of the term *botifler*, as seen in fig. 20, was particularly frequent. *Botifler* is yet another nod to the War of Spanish Succession. It was used in the early 18th century to refer to supporters of the Bourbon

royal family, who were fighting against the Principality of Catalonia during the war (Cattini 451) and remain on the Spanish throne to this day. The term has reemerged during *el Procés* as an insult against those who do not support independence. Therefore, its use to describe the leaders of the pro-independence parties is striking, and speaks to the high level of disillusionment among those in the populace who are partial to secession.



Fig. 18. “Polítics, sou el fracàs del procés independentista. Heu ‘cremat’ [e]l poble i les seves il·lusions” (Politicians, you are the failure of the independence process. You have burned the populace and their dreams) atop an *estelada*.



Fig. 19. “Els partits ens heu traït” (Political parties, you have betrayed us) with an *estelada* and *República catalana* flags.



Fig. 20. “Botiflers, la història us jutjarà” (Traitors, history will judge you) with many *estelades* and *estelades vermelles* in the background.



Fig. 22. “Catalunya Nord també és Catalunya” (Northern Catalonia is also Catalonia) with *estelades* and *Intersindical Canaria* flags in the background.

The third most frequent theme is **Solidarity**. Sympathetic compatriots from other Spanish autonomous communities who also have secessionist aspirations joined in *la Diada* celebrations, with their own heraldic imagery on full display. Such was the case for the *Intersindical Canaria*, an organization that advocates for independence of the Canary Islands from Spain. Their flags were accompanied by T-shirts proclaiming “*Autodeterminación*” (Self-determination), with the *Intersindical Canaria* flag and the *estelada vermella* joined in a heart (detail seen in fig. 21). Heraldic emblems were also present from the Basque Country and Biafra, where there are also secession movements. *La Diada* participants from Northern Catalonia (the Catalan-speaking region of France), the LGBT+ community, and various neighborhoods and cities of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area also showed Solidarity with Catalonia’s cause (see, e.g., figs. 22 and 23). Fig. 22 demonstrates how Catalan identity is not contained within Catalonia’s borders.



Fig. 23. “*Alliberament afectiu, sexual, de gènere, de classe, nacional. Crida LGBTI: Vine a lluitar amb nosaltres*” (Affective, sexual, gender, class, national liberation. Shout LGBTI: Come and fight with us) with an *estelada* at the top and the chromatic spectrum from the pride flag on bottom.

In terms of the relationship between theme and heraldic imagery, Table 6 shows that whereas 91% of LL artifacts that incorporate independence-oriented heraldry express messages related to **Independence**, only 37% of written artifacts with *senyeres* pertain to this theme. Figs. 24–26 show examples of *estelada* variations in **Independence** signage.



Fig. 21. “*Autodeterminación*” (Self-determination) with the *Intersindical Canaria* and *estelada vermella* flags joined in a heart.



Fig. 24. “*L’únic que ens salvarà de tanta demència: La independència*” (The only thing that will save us from so much insanity: Independence), with an *estelada*.





Fig. 25. “Lluitem i guanyem la independència” (Let’s fight and win independence), with an *estelada*.



Fig. 26. “Ni un pas enrere, independència!” (Not a single step back, independence!), with an *estelada vermella*.

Fig. 27 shows a noteworthy example of a rare *Independence* artifact with the *senyera*: a replica of the voting urns used during the 2017 independence referendum with a message saying “Votarem” (We will vote). The real urns used during the referendum did, in fact, contain *senyeres*. In the context of an official referendum, it would not have been reasonable to show bias toward independence with an *estelada*.



Fig. 27. Voting urn, “Votarem” (We will vote).

The only theme for which the *senyera* was more frequent than independence-oriented emblems was **Catalan Cultural Identity**. Considering the significantly lower presence of *senyeres* as compared to pro-independence heraldry in the corpus (see Table 2), this finding is striking. Nearly half of the written signs with *senyeres* dealt with this theme (see, e.g., figs. 28–29).



Fig. 28. T-shirt, “No vaig escollir ser català, només vaig tenir sort” (I didn’t choose to be Catalan, I just got lucky).



Fig. 29. Poster, “Venim de Ponent. Catalonia is not Spain” (We come from Ponent).

A chi-squared test with pairwise comparisons confirms that the proportional mix of *senyeres* and independence-oriented heraldry was significantly different between signs with themes of **Independence** and **Catalan Cultural Identity** ( $p < .0001$ ). Figs. 30–31 show additional artifacts related to **Catalan Cultural Identity**. These signs, as well as fig. 29, characterize Catalan identity as being in opposition to Spanish identity. The use of English in fig. 30 could suggest that participants want to make this distinction clear to foreigners in the touristic center of Barcelona or those reading international news coverage of *la Diada*.



Fig. 30. “I am not Spanish, I am Catalan”.



Fig. 31. “*Mai no ens fareu espanyols*”  
(You will never make us Spanish).

A final point of interest from Table 6 is that while the majority of artifacts for the **Independence**, **Catalan Cultural Identity**, and **Feminism** themes incorporated some form of heraldic imagery (80.1%, 57.7%, and 54.5%, respectively), as well as a near majority of **Solidarity** artifacts (43.3%), only 16.1% of **Betrayal** artifacts did. Given that **Betrayal** artifacts were generally directed at Catalan politicians whom participants believe have acted in opposition to the values represented by those emblems, a possible interpretation is that *Diada* participants believe that it would be incoherent to place those negative messages alongside Catalan heraldic imagery.

## Conclusions

Data from the heraldic and linguistic landscapes of the 2022 *Diada* suggest that in the post-referendum context, Catalonia’s National Day remains more focused on secessionist ambitions than on celebrating Catalan culture. The overwhelming presence of *estelades* and *banderes negres* in comparison to *senyeres*, as well as the dominating theme of Independence in signage, indicate that participation is fueled by a desire to express support for this specific cause. Though the *senyera* continues to be an indispensable emblem of Catalan identity, it would seem that its presence alone is no longer sufficient to achieve acceptance in the context of *Diada* festivities. Participants strongly favor emblems that are explicitly pro-independence for their flags, signs, and clothing, while the *senyera* appears to be more amenable for accessories.

The designers of the black and white *bandera negra* stated that the message they want to convey with the flag is one of no surrender (Rocalvalva). Chromatically, then, the dominance of black and white in the 2022 *Diada*, particularly in the official merchandise designed by ANC, indicates that a policy of no surrender must be adopted in order to achieve independence. In a sense, independence is a black and white issue that cannot be achieved through compromise. It is therefore fitting that black and white were the predominant colors of signs about betrayal. Participants are communicating to politicians that they have failed to meet their expectations in the five years following the referendum. To redeem themselves, they cannot surrender or compromise on independence. Thus, while fervor surrounding the prospect of independence is still alive in Catalonia, supporters of secession have communicated that political leaders must change course in order to make it possible.

## Notes

- [1] Throughout this paper, “Castilian” is used to refer to the Spanish language, as it is generally known as such in the Iberian Peninsula. “Spanish” is used as an adjectival form related to Spain as a state.
- [2] Commander in Chief of Catalonia during the Siege of Barcelona
- [3] Unless otherwise noted, all images come from the author’s photographs from the 2022 *Diada*.
- [4] Examples include graffiti or banners about unrelated themes such as English movie quotes about friendship or keeping noise down in the neighborhood at night.
- [5] The percentages shown reflect the percentages of artifacts that include that theme or language. Some artifacts include multiple themes or languages, which is why the total N sums to more than the total of 629 artifacts with written messages.
- [6] In the case of fig. 13, an *estelada vermella* appears as part of the logo for the Popular Unity Candidacy (CUP), a left-wing pro-independence political party.
- [7] The Catalan Countries refer to territories where Catalan is spoken, including Catalonia, the Balearic Islands, the Valencian Community, and parts of Aragon and Murcia in Spain, as well as Andorra, the department of Pyrénées-Orientales in France, and the city of Alghero in Italy.
- [8] President of the Government of Catalonia as of the time of writing.
- [9] The Republican Left of Catalonia, a pro-independence political party.

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