Johannes Heß and Tobias Klee

# Putting the Masculinity into Liberalism. Gender Essentialism and Catalan Self-Perception as a Progressive Liberal Democracy

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# Putting the Masculinity into Liberalism

## Gender Essentialism and Catalan Self-Perception as a Progressive Liberal Democracy

Johannes Heß and Tobias Klee


### ABSTRACT

The present-day narrative of Catalan nationalism emphasises its liberal and progressive nature, in opposition to a dictatorial and backwards Spain. Characteristic for this liberalism is, among other things, the strong presence of feminism in Catalan institutions and civil society. The narrative of Catalonia as a liberal space *par excellence* has historical roots reaching back to the end of the 19th century, when Catalans also portrayed themselves as liberal and Spain as despotic. They infused this liberalism with notions of rationality and masculinity. We examine the tension between the historically masculine nature of Catalan national symbols and the present-day attempt to frame Catalonia as feminist. Tracing how gendered ideas of Catalonia entered its national symbols, we can explain present-day backlash against a feminist intervention in these symbols, using Catalonia's national anthem as a case study. We conclude that liberalism in Catalonia is interpellated with masculinity, limiting its future project as feminist.


### 1 INTRODUCTION[1]

On 10 October 2017, several days after the Catalan independence referendum, Carles Puigdemont, president of the *Generalitat de Catalunya*, addressed the Catalan parliament. In his speech, he celebrated the democratic character of the referendum, while lambasting Spain's disproportionate response. "This is the first time in the history of European democracies that elections are held amidst violent political attacks against the voters", he declared (Puigdemont 2017). While Catalans had ever peacefully advocated and worked for the broadening of its autonomy since the end of the Franco dictatorship, Spain, especially in the seven years leading up to the referendum, had responded with an increased effort to centralise the state, culminating in the violent suppression of the referendum. All of this, even though:

> Catalonia has been not just the economic motor of Spain, but also a factor of modernisation and stability. [...] Catalonia committed itself to the cause of returning the Spanish state to European and international institutions after forty years of isolation and autarky (Puigdemont 2017).

From the Catalan perspective, the case was clear cut. Spain had violated their democratic right of self-determination. Meanwhile, Catalonia had always been the modern, democratic force introducing Spain into the European community, whereas Spain resisted these processes, sometimes kicking and screaming. Now that Catalonia wanted to take its rightful place among the civilised nations of Europe, Spain latter relied on violence to maintain its authority.

The dichotomy of a liberal, modern, and progressive Catalonia opposing a dictatorial Spain has become crucial for the self-representation of Catalonia, especially in the Catalan independence movement. This is evident also, for example, in the politics of Catalonia, such as the establishing of a Ministry for Equality and Feminisms by the Aragonès government in 2021. Such a self-representation is, no doubt, in part instrumental, as

1 We would like to thank Samuel Plumb for his help in collecting the data and validating the coding. We would also like to thank Prof. Jessica Gienow-Hecht and Prof. Gülay Çağlar for their thorough comments on previous versions of this paper. A version of this paper was presented at the workshop "Defenders of the Motherland" at the Humboldt Forum in Berlin on 3 December 2021. We thank the participants of the workshop for their feedback.

Jean-Thomas Arrighi (2019: 293) suggests that promoting inclusive citizenship criteria and distancing oneself from ethnic projects of national self-determination can constitute a bid to garner international legitimacy. But Catalonia's self-representation as liberal reaches further back than the current independence movement, which gained ground in the 2010s.

Catalonia's liberalism reaches back to the beginning of the 20th century, when Catalan presidents elaborated a vision of Catalonia as liberal that was also deeply gendered. They opposed the Spanish monarchy and corruption, while elaborating a vision of Catalan society as liberal and masculine. Historically, Catalans presented themselves and their nation as liberal and civilised, in contrast to a despotic and primitive Spain. To support their argument, they stressed that Catalans were racially purely European, and therefore commanded the necessary, masculine mental faculties to develop a liberal society. Masculinity thus stood for progressiveness. Nowadays, the situation is quite different. Catalonia has established e.g. the Ministry of Feminism, to present itself as a progressive, civilised entity. While the claim to civilisation and progressiveness remains, the gender according to which they measure their progressiveness has changed. Now feminism and inclusiveness illustrate the progress of a liberal nation.

The connection between liberalism and gendered power imbalances is not new. Charlotte Hooper (2001: 98–99) outlines how the bourgeois-rational masculinity that historical liberalism favoured, while championing more democratic values than perhaps a martial warrior-masculinity, still relied on rejection of "feminine" emotions, since the liberal ideal is rationality. Moreover, as Carole Pateman (1988) has demonstrated, a "sexual contract" precedes the "social contract" of liberal contract theories. Liberalism has always been deeply implicated in the gendering of societies. In addition to feminist work revealing the extent to which liberalism rests on gendered power imbalances, important work in feminist studies of nationalism has established that men and women hold quite different roles in the nationalist imaginary. Men figure into the nationalist imagination as the strong, stalwart defenders of their country (Nagel 1998: 251–252). Meanwhile, they are the reproducers of the nation in the biological and cultural sense, but also reproducers of the boundaries of nations or the symbol for national difference, and only sometimes participants in the national struggle (Yuval-Davis/Anthias 1989: 7).

This article is focussed on exactly this aspect of the gendered nature of liberal nation-states. We are interested in the ways that national symbols are charged with gendered meaning and then serve to reproduce a gendered imaginary of the nation in liberal nation-states. We identify gendered symbols and discourses, which Catalan nationalists developed at the beginning of the 20th century. Especially the Catalan anthem, which gives a special place to the land and its defenders, readily took on this gendered meaning.

When Catalans portray their nation as progressive nowadays, using feminism as a sign of their modernity and liberalism, they run up against the constraints of these historical images. We examine a feminist intervention in the Catalan national anthem during the inauguration of Catalan president Pere Aragonès in 2021 and the subsequent backlash. We ask: how do the notions of masculinity that used to mark national progress and liberalism now constrain a re-framing of Catalonia as feminist and liberal? Our analysis traces how national symbols maintain and reproduce gender conceptions in nationalism, even in contexts that uphold liberalism as one of their key distinguishing features. Gendered images persist in national symbols. Any change to these symbols, and the gender order implied therein, becomes an attack on the nation itself. These findings call into doubt the liberalism of a "liberal nationalism".

Our paper first explores the usage of national symbols and their gendered nature. Afterwards, we analyse the discourse of Catalan nationalism at the beginning of the 20th century in its attempt to construct the Catalan nation and people as liberal, progressive, and masculine. We follow up on this with an exploration of how historical memory and national symbols play out in present-day Catalonia. Following this, we trace the backlash to the feminist intervention in the Catalan national anthem in order to highlight the persistence of masculinity in the Catalan national imaginary. We conclude that the self-avowed Catalan liberalism constrains the nationalist discourse to an inherently patriarchal framework, diminishing any effort towards equality and diversity in Catalonia.

## 2 NATIONAL SYMBOLS

Nation-states utilise by a plethora of symbols that have become more or less standardised. While the design of flags or the melodies of anthems differ, nearly all nations have a flag or an anthem (Cerulo 1993: 244). The precise symbols differ from nation to nation, but next to flags and anthems, they often incorporate things such as personifications of the nation, currency (even the Euro coins represent national difference!), traditional fashion, or landscapes (such as a characteristic mountain or particular environment).

National symbols fulfil a range of functions. Michael Billig (1995: 8) remarks on the function of the flag in both its waved and unwaved state, where the waved flag signals nationalist fervour and the unwaved flag subconsciously reproduces the existence of the nation. They create a sense of togetherness by delineating "us" from "them", and by allowing people to signal affiliation (Höpflinger 2015: 57).

Lastly, national symbols make the nation intelligible by making it tactile. One cannot touch a nation, but one can touch a flag, sing an anthem, climb a mountain, or dress in traditional garb. As such, they make the imagined project of the nation concrete (Palmer 1998: 195).

In the case of Catalonia, examining the national symbols of a stateless nation with an active separatist movement has an additional, interesting dimension: these symbols are both examples of "hot" nationalism of an actively nationalist movement, but also of "banal" nationalism of reaffirming the existence of the nation in day-to-day life (Billig 1995: 37–45). Flags and anthems are things that "real" nations have, and so to have an anthem is to prove one's nationhood. Kathryn Crameri (2012: 154) argues that the ability to display the flag on public buildings and to incorporate the Catalan language and cultural traditions such as the *Sardana* or the building of the *Castells* into everyday life has established Catalonia as a nation. Symbols of nationhood thus play a crucial role in the establishment of Catalonia in the everyday imagination.

In the following, we explore the interplay between gender and national symbols. The gendering of some national symbols (such as national representations in the form of female figures) has been investigated by scholars such as Tricia Cusack and Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch (2003), Anne Helmreich (2003), Anna-Katharina Höpflinger (2015), and Oliver Lauenstein, Jeffrey S. Murer, Margarete Boos, and Stephen Reicher (2015).

### 2.1 GENDER AND NATIONAL SYMBOLS

Scholars of gender and nationalism have established that European 19th century nationalisms are masculine undertakings. Modern notions of masculinity emerged in concert with nationalism, and as such, they share a common language and common ideals (Nagel 1998: 249). At the same time, ideas about gender and power were used to structure the international system – hierarchies of

racial domination were analogised through those of men and women (Stepan 1986: 264).

Nevertheless, images representing the nation where often of women (such as Britannia, Germania, Helvetia, or Columbia), and gendered images of birth, motherhood, and family suffuse the national imagination (McClintock 1993: 63). The ubiquitous presence of terms such as "motherland" or "mother tongue" in connection with the masculine national project is paradoxical, but upon closer inspection the symbolic character of women is just another feature of a nationalism that privileges men. Women feature in symbolic function in the national imagination in a range of ways (Yuval-Davis/Anthias 1989: 8). There are the female personifications mentioned above, where the figure's youth and gender symbolise the health and fertility of the nation (Höpflinger 2015: 60). Representing the nation in the form of a woman is also tied to the idea of a "motherland" giving birth to the nation (Höpflinger 2015: 60). A feminine national personification further represents the mother of the citizens (Lauenstein et al. 2015: 313). Following Lauenstein, Murer, Boos, and Reicher (2015: 313), male representations rather stand in for the state as a father, and as the founders of the country. The nation-state in this imagery is a family, with a mother nation, a father state, and citizens as sons and daughters (Lauenstein et al. 2015: 313).

Women also come to stand for the national honour (Yuval-Davis 1993: 627). If membership in the nation is conveyed through birth, the control of women's sexuality becomes imperative to maintaining the purity of the nation (Yuval-Davis 1993: 628). Thus, women are the "border guards" of the nation, but they are rarely the ones doing the guarding – instead it is male relatives or legislators (but also older women) who policewomen's appropriate behaviour (Yuval-Davis 1993: 627–630). Women also feature in the national imagination as that which needs protecting. Cynthia Enloe speaks of the "womenandchildren" (1993: 1), Jean B. Elshtain of "beautiful souls" for which men go to war (Elshtain 1987: 3). Maintaining a gendered divide in wartime provides a psychological respite for the men doing the fighting (Goldstein 2001: 301–322), by delineating gendered spaces where fighting and violence are not supposed to enter (even when, especially in war zones, they frequently do). Lastly, gendered ideas also feature in the national imagination in the figure of the unmanly enemy. Here, gendered ideas about strength, masculinity, and gendered power relations are used to devalue the out-group which one is fighting and prop up one's own masculinity (Slootmaeckers 2019: 249).

These are diverse ways in which gendered symbols feature in the national imagination. The symbolic position of the female gender stands in opposition to the concrete representation of men in the nation. Great statesmen (and the link of the masculine with the state is not an accident, see Burstyn 1983; MacKinnon 1982) suffuse public spaces in statues valorising generals, kings, politicians, and other public figures. Women, on the other hand, are more often than not only present as symbols, as stand-ins for a larger group (Monk 1992: 124). The larger picture is this: men are concrete, women abstract – because the abstract nature of the female personification lends itself better to symbols. Representations of men are perceived as political, whereas representations of women are apolitical (Cusack 2000: 546). Women are not seen as political agents, but rather become symbols for whom politics is made for or about.

One example of these gendered national symbols are national anthems. Emerging alongside nationalisms in the 19th century, they were equally loaded with notions of masculinity and femininity as the nationalisms they belonged to. Their symbolic repertoire consisting of references to folklore, traditions, or national history, they allude

to a homeland or motherland, to the flag, and a call to arms or the celebration of military victories play a central role in their textual arrangement (Waterman 2020: 12–13). The often militaristic character of the anthems was a result of the French Revolution and the subsequent Napoleonic Wars, when nationalist movements alongside national symbols first rose to prominence in Europe. As European men for the first time experienced mass-conscriptions, the idea of soldier and national subject became intermingled (Mosse 1993: 14–15) The ideals of youth, manliness, sacrifice, camaraderie, and fraternity constituted the foundation of nationalism and its symbols (Mosse 1993: 14–15). Emerging from this context, most anthems call for military virtues in the defence of the nation (Mosse 1993: 18). As Lauenstein, Murer, Boos, and Reicher show, national anthems often fuse these ideas with terminology related to family, such as painting the nation as mother, and the soldiers as her (male) children (Lauenstein et al. 2015: 324–326).

National homelands are another important symbol for nation-states. National homelands, according to John Etherington (2010: 1816), can be conceptualised as territories that, from the perspective of one ethnicity, display stark differences from other territories. Their territory is clearly defined within the nationalist discourse, they supposedly contain an internally highly homogeneous population, and expand loyalties to only local communities (villages, towns, cities) towards the national collective. Within a nationalism, constructing a homeland gives an ethnic community a supposed long-lasting tie to a specific geographic area. A thus denoted homeland not only represents the origin of a people, but also becomes the only area where the nation can hope for a prosperous future. As Robert J. Kaiser (2002: 230) postulates: "Narrating nation and homeland in this way naturalises the linkage between blood and soil, and so strengthens the legitimacy of nationalist claims to the land itself".

Kaiser (2002: 233) also hints at the usage of feminine or masculine markers to gender and personify the homeland, as a means to strengthen the bond between the population and the territory even further. As this overview shows, ideas about the appropriate gendered division of labour have been prevalent in nationalism since its 19th century inception. European nationalisms have carried gendered ideas into the present day, often unnoticed and unremarked.

## 3 FROM IMPERIAL PENETRATION TO REPUBLICAN APPEAL. THE TRANSFORMATION OF CATALAN NATIONAL VIRILITY

Key to the formation of Catalan nationalism in the early 20th century was Enric Prat de la Riba's "La Nacionalitat Catalana" (1906). The ten chapters spanning treatise would serve as an ideological base for early Catalan regionalist politics in the *Lliga Regionalista*, and the 1914 *Mancomunitat*, a body of self-administration. It would be the starting and reference point for the development of future pushes towards more regional autonomy and even separatism. Here, Prat de la Riba and his political allies began to translate their ideas into a political reality (Sosa-Velasco 2009: 176). "La Nacionalitat Catalana" (1906) specifically addressed the enthusiastic mood of the Catalan *annus mirabilis* (Krauel 2013: 149). The specific audience for these chapters were young Catalanist intellectuals like Eugeni d'Ors or Gabriel Alomar (Sosa-Velasco 2009: 150).

Accordingly, the book's introduction carries an optimistic tone, despite acknowledging the lack of Catalan self-government. Prat de la Riba likened national awakenings to the rebirth of nature after the winter, writing: "[E]very year, nature gives us a living image of what the renaissance of a people entails. [...] Winter stifles the circulation of life, [...] covers the *terra* with snow and frost",

until "the snow of the mountains thaws, thickening the rivers [...]; the *terra* feels penetrated by all its molecules, the amorous humidity of the fertilising water" (Prat de la Riba 1906: 9).

Similarly, "for the peoples, winter is not death but the gestation/pregnancy of a new life" (Prat de la Riba 1906: 10). Prat de la Riba then went on to describe the decline of Catalonia throughout the centuries, referencing, among others, the fall of Barcelona in 1714 and the resulting end of Catalan autonomous rights in Spain. He described this as the Catalan winter.

For him, though, the developments were no reason to dismay, because "in the heart of this winter itself began the new life. Like how she fertilises the buried seed in her entrails, the *terra* fertilised the Catalan spirit that the bad weather disrupted". Like a womb, the *terra* nourished and protected Catalan culture from outside influences.

Prat de la Riba further explained the importance of the *terra* in that sense:

> *Terra* is the name of the *pàtria*. [...] The *terra* of the fathers [cat. pares, alternatively: parents], [...] is the living *terra* of the current generations, [it is] the living *terra* of the current generations, [it is] the never dried up breast which will nourish the coming generations, like it has nourished the past ones" (Prat de la Riba 1906: 17–18).

Prat de la Riba translated the function of the *terra* in nature, i.e. protecting life during winter and giving birth to it afterwards, to the situation of the Catalan people. Whereas the winter, the subjugation of Catalonia through the *Nova Planta* decrees, disrupted the Catalan spirit, the Catalan *terra* offered it protection and would eventually revitalise it. Through this metaphor, Prat de la Riba equated the rise and fall of nations with natural phenomena, and therefore interpreted them as facts that are bound to occur. Additionally, he tied attributes to this image, which give the *terra* strong motherly connotations. Not only did the "the amorous humidity of the fertilising water" penetrate the *terra*, but the *terra* itself nourished the Catalan spirit, by breastfeeding past and future Catalan generations. As long as the land remains fruitful, so to speak, Catalonia will subsist.

In the process of attribution, Prat de la Riba unambiguously feminised the *terra*. Through the usage of the familial image, it is clear that he conceived of nations as serving a similar purpose as families. The feminine tasks within the national family therefore would rest in acts of caring and nurturing. Implicitly, the role of Catalan women in the nation would similarly lie in giving birth, nurturing, and preserving Catalans and Catalan culture. Through their association with natural forces, he presented these activities as naturally feminine, and therefore biologically determined (see also Mateos-Sillero 2013: 307). This falls in line with Nira Yuval-Davis' finding that "[w]omen are often constructed as the cultural symbols of the collectivity, of its boundaries, as carriers of the collectivity's 'honour' and as its intergenerational reproducers of culture" (Yuval-Davis 1997: 67).

At the same time, the gendered nature of the Catalan language carried another implication, which later passages of the book corroborate: Prat de la Riba wrote about the "*terra dels pares*/*terra* of fathers or parents". If in his narrative the *terra* is the mother to Catalans, a representation of the Catalans' father supposedly exists as well. Even letting aside linguistic arguments, a father figure would still be missing in the familial picture that Prat de la Riba paints of Catalonia. Therefore, the question arises who these father figures might be, and what role they would play in the upbringing of Catalonia, considering that nourishment is the task of the *terra*.

While he had attributed the tasks of caring and nurturing to the *terra*, the actual construction of

the Catalan nation, as well as its ideological foundation, was the task of a number of passionate "seekers of the pure gold of the Catalan tradition" (Prat de la Riba 1906: 39–40). Even though Prat de la Riba did not overtly paint these people in a masculine or fatherly way, a few indications allow for this conclusion. He only employed the masculine gendered plural when talking about the people who defined Catalanism. This is no surprise, as key figures of Catalanism like Buenaventura Carlos Aribau, Jacint Verdaguer, Joan Maragall, Valentí Almirall, or Manuel Milà were all men. From this, Prat de la Riba derived a historicist law, namely that men are responsible for the construction of national identities. This point becomes even clearer in another passage, where he writes:

> [A]nd then comes a great thinker and demonstrates to us that Catalonia does not only have a language, a Code of Law, a national spirit and character, but also has a national thought, and in in front of our eyes passed by a rosary of great men from our *terra*, and of all of them we get to see how each of them handed something down, something acted in common (Prat de la Riba 1906: 47–48).

Here, an array of great men contributed to what Prat de la Riba called "the intellectual formulation [of the fatherland], *Nació*" (Prat de la Riba 1906: 47). Thus, while by natural law the *terra* becomes the mother of Catalonia, "*grans homes*", as per the law of history, become exemplary figures for the nation. Even though Prat de la Riba never described the great men with words related to fatherhood, he clearly presented their deeds as historians, artists, poets, politicians, scholars of law etc. as exemplary and fundamental for the *nació*. Presenting the Catalan nation with familial terms, and clearly casting the *terra* in the role of mother, this only left the great men as father figures. Women were curiously absent from his analysis. While he did have a conception of motherhood and its importance for the nation and for Catalan society, this is the only role that he envisioned for feminine action. Women collectively, were the Catalan mother. As Mateos Sillero concludes with regard to the construction of femininity: "the man is an individual, the woman, to the contrary, has no other existence outside of her generic" (Mateos Sillero 2013: 305).

Notably as well, Prat de la Riba highlighted intellectual and cultural feats as central to the existence of a Catalan nation. He did not refer to militaristic attributes or events to evidence and construct its existence. In this he falls in line with e.g. Valentí Almirall, who had originally defined a supposed Catalan character in his book "Lo Catalanisme" (1886), where he emphasised the intellectual capacities of Catalans compared to Spaniards (Almirall 1979: 51). Prat de la Riba himself noted 12 years later that Castilians were always trapped in their fantasies, whilst Catalans acted positivist and realistic, pensive, and calculated. Catalans were firmly set within the "industrial current of modern people". The reason for their difference was simple biology: "the Castilian people [...] is a predominantly Semitic people: the African and Arab blood transpires in its way of being" (Prat de la Riba 1899: 1).

Famously, Joane Nagel had stipulated that nationalism and national institutions were deeply masculinist in nature, since their foundational myths rest in some way or another on the results of war and the idealisation of military prowess, both historically perceived and constructed as purely male dominions (Nagel 1998). Since Catalan nationalism though did not establish itself out of violence and largely did not seek military endeavours, Catalanists arguably did not have define their nation as virile according to militaristic qualities. Catalan virility thus did not manifest in being capable in battle, honouring sacrifice, fraternity, and duty, but in intellectual and economic feats. These very capacities placed Catalans among the civilised peoples of Europe, apart from the supposedly racially inferior, African Spaniards.

These differences in race and character would place Catalonia in a prime position to renew and civilise Spain, helping it finding its place among European nations as well. Finding itself at the height of its national development, Catalonia would soon engage in imperialism transforming the nations of the Iberian Peninsula into an imperial Federation. As Prat de la Riba argued, Catalonia had already begun its imperial destiny, facing a Spain on the verge of decadence. "Art, literature, judicial concepts, the political ideal and the economy of Catalonia have begun [...] the peaceful penetration of Spain" (Prat de la Riba 1906: 127). Catalonia, civilised and strong in its national reawakening, had taken the first step towards reforging the fallen empire. Spain, having lost its masculinity by losing Cuba in 1898, lay ready for penetration by a Catalonia oozing with virile energy and on par with the European powers of its time.

Referencing Theodore Roosevelt and arguing similarly to his speech "The Strenous Life", Prat de la Riba would argue that "the actions of great men have to be exercised in the sense of goodness. [...] If the strong man does not feel the impulse towards high things, his strength is a curse for him and for everyone" (Prat de la Riba 1906: 127). A man's strength therefore would be measured by how much it would contribute to the common good. As masculinity meant empire, the value of an empire as well depended on its improvement, read civilisation, of the world.

Though Catalonia was never to achieve these imperial ambitions, Catalan nationalism continued to style itself as civilised, European – and, increasingly as liberal. The emphasis on Catalans' liberal character grew all the stronger, when relations with central Spain grew tense. When negotiations for a statute of autonomy failed in 1919, the president of Catalonia's regional autonomist administration, Josep Puig i Cadafalch showed his outrage in an article for the Italian journal "La Vita Inernazionale". He affirmed that "Catalonia [...] is the richest and most industrious people of Spain, the most European, the most progressed in the political education", whilst Spain remained "stubborn in the anachronistic cult of the principles of domination and centralism" (Puig i Cadafalch 1919b: 1). Catalonia was in time with the rest of Europe, while Spain remained in the past. Catalonia's European "will to liberty" clashed with Spain's African "persistence of tyranny" (Puig i Cadafalch 1919b: 2). Yet with all its desire for control and despotism, Spain was unable to enforce peace in Barcelona and prevent e.g. anarchist bomb attacks. Maintaining "African backwardness", Spain dared to deny Catalonia its autonomy, though the latter was "fully capable, and spiritually integrated among Western Europe" (Puig i Cadafalch 1919a: 5).

Francesc Macià, first president of the Catalan autonomous government in the 1930s, would pronounce these positions most resoundingly. Leading the paramilitary, fringe separatist organisation *Estat Català*, he found himself in French Exile during the 1920s, having fled from the Spanish Primo de Rivera dictatorship. In France, he planned to march an insurrectionary army into Spain, to liberate Catalonia and end the dictatorship. But the French police foiled his plans and he and his companions found themselves on trial in Paris 1926. There, they could argue the case of Catalonia in front of an international audience.

To win the hearts and minds of the French public for Catalan independence, *Estat Català* argued that unlike Spain, Catalonia had never suffered the influence of Islam during the medieval period. Catalans had in fact borne the brunt of the fight against the Muslims, maintaining close political, cultural, and ecclesiastical relations with the Frankish Empire, all the while forming a well-defined national identity of their own. Through centuries of Muslim presence, Spaniards lacked the abilities of other European peoples. They were

neither capable of rational thought, nor of establishing stable, consent-based structures of government. Catalonia found itself detached from that history and had therefore developed like the rest of civilised Europe (Estat Català 1927: 14). Additionally, they claimed that Catalonia had had "most ancient Parliament of Europe" (Estat Català 1927: 13) during the Middle Ages, in form of the 13th century *Corts Catalanes*, an assembly of the three estates of the Crown of Aragón, which held some legislative powers. This narrative of the "ancient constitutions of Catalonia, model of democracy" (Estat Català 1927: 16) was supposed to again highlight the progressiveness of the Catalan race, as well as its likeness to the liberal nations of Western Europe.

Macià himself made this point explicit during the trial, by proclaiming that "it is absolutely impossible for Catalonia to live with Spain, from which it has such opposite characteristics. [...] The liberal spirit can never fraternise with despotism, nor the democratic spirit with inquisitorial reactionism" (Estat Català 1927: 38). Catalonia had to become "an independent Catalan Republic in the concert of free peoples; a democratic, peaceful and republican State" (Estat Català 1927: 38).

Catalonia found itself alongside the democratic people of Europe, who had followed the course of time, and developed characteristics opposed to those of the uncivilised peoples of the world. Spain, stuck in the past due to its intermixture with Muslims, was simply different from Catalonia, which had remained pure from African influences and had always maintained a strong connection to continental Europe. Catalans therefore exhibited rationality and the will to freedom, while Spain represented despotism and racial inferiority or even degeneration.

As highlighted above, Catalan nationalism had coded intellectual capacity and rationality as masculine characteristics, and originally saw in them the base for Catalonia's superiority towards Spain and the justification for Catalan virile imperialism. But Macià also envisioned a certain type of masculinity as a precondition to a free and democratic Catalonia. In the pamphlet "Catecisme del Jove Patriota" [Catechism of the young patriot] from 1922, *Estat Català* calls on the "sons of Catalonia", "the men of the *terra*", "[the] young Catalan", "your brothers". As they were "men who had a responsibility", namely the "liberty [...] justice and [...] honour" of Catalonia, they had to adhere to a strict set of virtues to fulfil their masculine duty (Estat Català 1922). *Estat Català* called upon them to "prepare your intelligence, your physical resistance and your moral strength. [...] Exercise physically. [...] Do not drink, do not gamble, do not prostitute yourself. Put the supreme interest of the Pàtria before your personal interest. [...] Be disciplined and hope for the final triumph" (Estat Català 1922). They had to form a type of masculinity full of abnegation, prepared to make sacrifices, and ready to fight, intellectually as well as physically. Only then would they be capable to achieve Catalonia's liberty. Incidentally, these were the characteristics Nagel identifies as typical for the inherent masculinity of nationalism.

On the 6 October 1934, Lluís Companys, second president of the regional Catalan government, would rhetorically merge this militaristic and intellectual/liberal self-conception of Catalonia. In opposition to the reigning conservative *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas* (CEDA) government in Madrid, he declared a Federal Spanish State, with its provisional government in Barcelona, which would only last a few hours before the Spanish military arrested him and his collaborators (see also Maciá Mercadé 2002; Pagès i Blanch 2013; Payne 2008).

In his speech, Companys declared that "the liberal, democratic and republican Catalonia" (La Humanitat 1934) would join the fight of the Spanish "socially advanced sectors" against "the

monarchising and fascist forces". While he did not explicitly mention that this was Catalonia's fight alone, Companys must have believed that Spanish republicans were too few and lacked influence to save the republic. This would be ideologically continuous to Macià's proclamations in Paris, and the general Catalanist notion of superiority and modernity regarding Spain.

The rest of Companys' speech also made it very clear that he saw Catalonia's place at the helm of the would-be liberal revolution. The president invited the republican forces to establish "in Catalonia the Provisional Government of the republic, which will find in our Catalan people the most generous impulse of fraternity in the shared goal of establishing a free liberal republic". Barcelona would be the capital of a federalised, liberal, read, civilised Spain. Bar the lack of imperialist language, this echoed Prat de la Riba vision of Catalan predominance on the Iberian Peninsula. Striking a more militaristic tone he referenced values such as "fraternity", "discipline", "patriotic objectives", and that Catalans felt "strong and invincible". Thus, in an effort to give Catalonia more autonomy within Spain and topple the Spanish government, he fell back on emphasising both aspects of Catalan virility, its liberalism, as well as its preparedness to fight.

## 4 MEMORY, GENDER, AND CATALAN NATIONAL SYMBOLS

Because Francoist repression targeted Catalonia for not assimilating to the Francoist vision of Spain, resistance to the dictatorship in Catalonia worked together with Catalanist forces (Dowling 2013: 99). During the transition to democracy, the recovery of Catalan institutions of self-government *Generalitat* was an important demand for Catalans. The slogan that members of the anti-Franco civil society coalition *Assemblea de Catalunya* chanted when they went out in the streets by the thousands was "llibertat, amnistia, estatut d'autonomia" (liberty, amnesty, statute of autonomy) (Dowling 2013: 96), seeking to reclaim what Catalonia already had during the Second Republic. The preamble of the Statute of Autonomy of 1979 makes the historical importance of the *Generalitat* explicit:

> The collective liberty of Catalonia finds in the institutions of the *Generalitat* the link to a history of affirmation of and respect for basic rights and public liberties of persons and peoples; a history which the men and women of Catalonia want to continue to enable the construction of an advanced democratic society (Llei Orgànica 4/1979, own translation).

The *Generalitat* offered Catalonia a democratic past to reference. This republican past served to construct national continuity, but also a story of Catalonia as progressive and democratic. This narrative would come to be very important for the nation's self-understanding.

At the same time that the Statute of Autonomy affirmed Catalonia's democratic past, it also affirmed its status as a nation. The Statute of Autonomy established the flag of Catalonia. Its symbolism is historic: The four red stripes on a yellow background reference the legend of Wilfried the Hairy, who defended territory in the lands that later became Catalonia against the Muslims who ruled Al-Andalus to the South (Vargas 2018: 30). Today, the *Senyera* is part of the iconography of the *Generalitat*. It hangs on public buildings and is displayed during official acts (as mandated by Article 4 of the Spanish law on the use of flags, Ley 39/1981), but it is less present during the mass mobilisation for independence. During those events, the *Estelada* is the flag of choice. The flag, with its white star on a blue triangle (or, when used by the revolutionary left, a red star on a yellow triangle), recalls the Cuban flag, and was created at the beginning of the twentieth century

with the goal of providing a banner for independence (Crexell 1988: 81, 129).

With the *Onze de Setembre* (11 September), the *Generalitat* declared a national holiday in 1980 (Llei 1/1980). The *Diada*, as the day also is known in Catalan, had been the centre of Catalan nationalist mobilisation directly after the death of the dictator, with 100.000 people turning out for the demonstration in 1976 (Balcells 1996: 169). Celebrations of the day can be traced back to at least 1886 (Smith 2014: 206). Like the flag, the *Diada* recalls the contentious historical relationship between Catalonia and Spain, or at least imposes such a frame on historical events. It recalls the breaking of the siege of Barcelona and the entering of Bourbon troops into Barcelona at the end of the Spanish War of Succession, where Catalonia had supported the Habsburg side of the conflict. Following defeat of Barcelona, Philip V of Spain instituted the *Nova Planta* decrees, which curtailed Catalan autonomy (McRoberts 2001: 15).

A 1993 law established "Els Segadors" as the national anthem of Catalonia. The preamble of the law emphasises the long history of the song and its connection to Catalonia (Llei 1/1993). The text (see Figure 1) recalls the Reaper's War of 1640, an event which lent itself to interpretation in a modern nationalist frame: Catalan farmers rose up against the stationing of Castilian troops in Barcelona (Grafl 2014: 96–97). It thus joined the flag as a symbol that signified Catalan resistance to (Spanish) invasion. Its anti-Spanish character meant that various Spanish authorities banned the song multiple times, which likely added to its popularity and mystification as a symbol of resistance (Cuscó i Clarasó 2007: 73).

The text of the anthem also has an interesting historical genesis. When Manuel Milà i Fontanals published the "Romancerillo Catalán. Canciones Tradicionales", a collection of traditional Catalan songs in 1882, he included a folk version of the contemporary anthem. This song, titled "La guerra de los segadores" (The Reaper's War) presented the popular recollection of how the Spanish king and his representatives waged war against Catalonia by destroying villages and churches, as well as by raping Catalan women (Milà i Fontanals 1882: 72–73). The Catalan *terra* specifically, standing in for Catalonia as a whole, suffered at the hands of the Spaniards. The reapers, for which the song is named, have close ties to the land through their profession. Their uprising thus represents an act of resistance by the *terra* itself.

Figure 1: Els Segadors (own translation)

*Triumphant Catalonia will be rich and plentiful again.*
*Root out these arrogant and conceited people.*

*(Chorus)*
*One good strike with the sickle,*
*One good strike with the sickle, defenders of the land.*

*Now is the time, reapers,*
*Now is the time to be vigilant.*
*We will sharpen the tools for that coming June.*

*(Chorus)*

*May our enemy tremble upon seeing our standard.*
*Just as we cut the golden ears of wheat,*
*When the time is ripe, we will cut the chains.*

*(Chorus)*

This linking of Catalan people and Catalan land stands in striking contrast to "Els Segadors" written in 1897 by Emili Guanyavents i Jané, the version which would become the anthem in 1993. Its chorus calls for a "good strike with the sickle" against the "arrogant and conceited" Spaniards by the "defenders of the land", who thus liberate Catalonia. Whereas, in the folk version, the *terra* represented the Catalan people and played an

active role in its own defence, Guanyavents relegates the *terra* to passivity, reliant on being defended, and separated from the people.

The past is thus firmly embedded in Catalan national symbols, not just these three examples (as shown by Vargas 2018). The anthem specifically allows us to trace how gendered images have persisted in Catalan nationalism. It recalls terms that Prat de la Riba imbued with specific gendered meaning about the ordering of the Catalan nation and Catalan society. Billig (1995: 41) writes of the nationalism of unwaved flags, so banal as to be forgotten. The gendered images of Catalan nationalism that became solidified in the anthem, too, were forgotten. They have become invisible to Catalans, even as they sing the anthem proudly and often. The gendered nature only becomes visible in extraordinary moments, such as the inauguration of Pere Aragonès as President of the *Generalitat* in 2021.

## 5 INTERVENING IN THE GENDERED SYMBOLOGY OF THE NATION. THE CASE OF LES SEGADORES

At the Catalan presidential inauguration in May 2021, a jazz duo comprising of singer Magalí Sare and contrabassist Manel Fortià performed the Catalan national anthem. Sare, in her performance, made two small but significant changes to the song: In the second verse, she changed the male "segadors" (reapers) to the female "segadores," and the male "defensors" (defenders) to the female "defensores".

The responses to this on the internet and in the media were quite negative. One video of her performance, uploaded to YouTube by the newspaper *La Vanguardia*, was titled "Here is the polemic version of 'Les segadores'" (2021). Another one was titled "The version of 'Els segadors' during the inauguration of Pere Aragonès that no one liked" (Estado de Alarma Oficial 2021). Multiple opinion pieces, for example a host of the morning program Els matins, focused on the "politically correct" nature of the changes in lyrics, emphasising that while he did not agree with this politically motivated choice, the piece was nevertheless a feat of musical accomplishment, and that Sare had the right to make such changes in exercising her right to free speech. Others took a less positive view. In an opinion piece for *El Nacional*, another journalist wrote: "The only problem is that a hymn is only a hymn when it can create a sense of belonging and togetherness, not when it foments division or generates debates [...]" (Roig 2021).

This comment shows how the commentators see a feminist intervention as antagonistic to nationalism because it divides the nation. National anthems, while nominally unifying songs, also expose internal divisions in the nation (Waterman 2020: 2603). By singing not of "segadors" (male, but nominally neutral) but "segadores" (female, and quite specifically so). Sare exposed one such division. She drew attention to the fact that not everybody is included in the call to action the anthem formulates ("Ara és hora, segadors"/ "Now is the time, reapers") by turning the gendered exclusion on its head.

The change in lyrics by Sare concerns the only mention of "segadors" in the second verse of the anthem, as well as the "defensors" of the second chorus. This means that the other two occurrences of "defensors" still remain in the masculine form. There is a fifth personal noun in the anthem: "l'enemic" (the enemy), in the third verse, remains in the masculine form. As Anderson (1989: 145) and Waterman (2020: 2603) point out, an important feature of national anthems is the experience of unisonance, of singing in concert with one's co-nationals. If that is indeed one of the primary ways in which an anthem establishes the national community, Sare's change of lyrics disrupts that unisonance. She changes the lyrics to a song

that "everybody" knows in an unexpected way. In essence, she disrupts the sense of togetherness the anthem is meant to convey.

An anthem not only consists of words. Melody and performance give it gravitas. The rhythm and melody of "Els Segadors" provide a striking contrast to its text. While the lyrics promise a certain optimism, talking of a "triumphant Catalonia" and calling the people to action in striking back against Spain, the melody is written in a minor key, where the verses are delivered in a rather slow rhythms, which makes it an exception among national anthems – most national anthems are written in major key (Waterman 2020: 2612). The melody of "Els Segadors" transmits dark tones. It seems to recall the hardships of the Reapers' War, each repeated call for "one good strike with the sickle" demanding endurance and stoicism in the face of an ongoing struggle against Spain. Another association that goes hand in hand with compositions in minor key is the season of winter. As mentioned, "Els Segadors" quite literally expresses that Catalonia waits for "another June". On the one hand, this references the outbreak of the Reaper's War June 1640. On the other hand, in a more metaphorical sense, a hibernating Catalonia awaits the break of summer. As in the mind of Catalanists like Enric Prat de la Riba, the metaphor of winter in the anthem plays an important role in the interpretation of the situation Catalonia found itself in.

Sare moves away from traditional performances of the Catalan anthem in her interpretation. She sings alone where, usually, a choir of voices would be singing, unaccompanied but for her bassist. None of the usual pomp of instrumentation accompanies here, and without a choir in the background, her performance loses some of the overwhelming quality of the choral renditions. Secondly, she leans into the mournful minor cadence of the song, performing it less like a march and more like a lament. Whereas the choral renditions are straightforward, leaving no room for individual singers to add vocal flourishes, Sare experiments with the melody and notes, lingering on some and jumping near playfully around others. As Susan McClary (1991: 23) points out, our experience of music is mediated through our bodies. This experience is not universal, but also mediated by our gender, our ethnic identity, our economic position, and so forth (McClary 1991: 25). Sare's melodical changes, as well as her appearance, played into the perception of the performance. She performed in a flowing green dress, with manicured nails done in yellow. Compared to the serious men (and women) in suits watching her, she struck an overtly feminine figure. One struggles to imagine a starker contrast with a deep, multivoiced choral piece than a sparsely accompanied female jazz singer.

As outlined in Table 2 below, Sare's appearance, as well as aspects of her performance that touched upon her embodiment, were a large part of the backlash against the performance.

Commentators spoke of "this very badly dressed girl" (not woman!), the "constipated" singer, advising her to "dedicate herself to another pursuit" because it appeared she was going to "shit herself" or criticised her supposed poor voice. Importantly, the commentators never referred to Sare as a "woman". While some commentators spoke of the (female) singer, many spoke of her as "hija" or "noia" ("girl" in Spanish and Catalan respectively). This infantilisation of Sare further takes away her credibility at performing the Catalan national anthem – after all, a girl is even further removed from a choir of voices than a woman, who is at least an adult.

In the following section, we would like to focus on the reactions to Sare's intervention in a Catalan national symbol. Her choice to sing of "female reapers" sparked a discussion on traditional media channels, but people also debated

her decision online. The internet is an important place for Catalan nationalist mobilisation, as it allows Catalans, for example, to challenge the Spanish historical narrative, or to mobilise people for the independence movement (Crameri 2012: 39; Iveson 2017: 54–55). Specifically, we focused on the ways people justified their liking or disliking of Sare's performance in the comments underneath the videos of her performance uploaded to the video sharing platform YouTube.

In order to ensure we found all uploaded videos, we first searched for "les segadores" (the female version of the name of the hymn, "Els Segadors"), then searched for "magalí sare els segadors" (the name of the singer plus the name of the hymn). This resulted in three videos. We will describe them here in short order. One video was uploaded by La Vanguardia titled "Así es la polémica versión de `Les segadores'" (2021), with 239 comments[2]. Another one was uploaded by Rising Caledonia, titled "Els Segadors interpretada per Magalí Sare i Manel Fortià" (2021)[3]. This video had nine comments. A third one was uploaded by *Estado de Alarma Oficial*, titled "La versión de 'Els Segadors' durante la toma de posesión de Pere Aragonès que no gusta a nadie" (Estado de Alarma Oficial 2021)[4]. People left 115 comments on this video. All videos were uploaded on 25 May 2021. Processing of the comments was completed on 24 September 2021, truncating the dataset there. However, no new comments had been added to any of the videos for a while at that point. This means we have likely captured a relatively complete picture of the debate as it played out on YouTube.

In order to identify different discourses within the comments, we coded the comments along sentiment and topic. This allowed us to identify broad strains in the debate, which we then supplemented with a close reading of comments in the relevant topics/topic combinations. First, "sentiment" of the comment referred to whether the comment expressed a negative, positive, or neutral sentiment towards the performance. Comments that did not refer to the performance received the label "off-topic", regardless of the sentiment they expressed. 11 comments could not be coded for sentiment at all as they were unclear in their message, either due to their shortness or because poor spelling and grammar made the intended meaning unclear. Secondly, we coded the comments by topics: nationalism, independence, gender, music, insult of the singer, anti-Catalanism. We developed this coding scheme inductively in a first reading of the comments, then read the comments again to apply the codes. A comment could contain multiple topics.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Sentiment Towards the Performance

| Sentiment | Count |
|---|---|
| Positive | 27 |
| Negative | 137 |
| Neutral | 11 |
| Off-topic | 152 |
| n/a | 11 |
| Total | 338 |

The overwhelming majority of the comments that focussed on the performance was negative in sentiment (see Table 1)[5]. About half of the comments were in favour of Catalan nationalism, while the other half was negatively inclined towards that project (see Table 2). Most of the criticism that focused on both gender and nationalism came from the commentators that favoured Catalan nationalism. Cross-tabulating comments tagged "Catalan nationalism" and "gender" yielded twenty-one comments, whereas cross-tabulating

2 Span.: Here is the polemic version of "Les segadores".

3 Cat.: Els Segadors interpreted by Magalí Sare and Manel Fortià.

4 Span.: The version of "Els Segadors" during the inauguration of Pere Aragonès that no one liked.

5 Among the comments coded as "off-topic" (since they did not refer to the performance) a large part was also negative in sentiment but directed at Catalonia or the independence movement.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Topics of the Comments

| Topic | Catalan Nationalism | Independence | Gender | Music | Insult | Anti-Catalanism |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Description** | A comment referred positively to Catalan nationalism or expressed a Catalan nationalist sentiment | A comment referred positively to the independence of Catalonia or demanded Catalan independence | A comment contained a gendered image or referred to the gendered dimension of the performance | A comment referred to musical elements of the performance | A comment insulted the singer or her appearance | A comment expressed a negative sentiment towards Catalonia or Catalan nationalism/ independence |
| **Count** | **53** | **13** | **43** | **126** | **15** | **54** |

"anti-Catalanism" and "gender" only yielded one. This is quite notable, since the Spanish right is opposed to both feminism and Catalan nationalism. VOX, the main radical right party in Spain, has built its electoral success on the twin bases of anti-feminism and anti-Catalanism (Bernardez-Rodal et al. 2022: 273), and one could thus expect more Spanish nationalists upset with Catalan nationalism in general to have capitalised on what many Catalans in the comments perceived as a self-feminisation. It seems, however, that people opposed to Catalan nationalism do not have an emotional stake in the anthem as a Catalan national symbol. What upset them, when they choose to view the video, were the trappings of nationhood which Catalonia gives itself as such. Thus, the gendered intervention barely registered next to the red flag of Catalan nationalism.

Catalan nationalists in the comments, at the same time, were deeply upset by the change. Among the twenty-one comments that included both Catalan nationalism and gender, two were positive, seventeen were negative, and two did not refer to the performance specifically. We now look at how these respondents constructed their objection to the performance in a way that specifically brought together ideas about the proper gendered nature of Catalan nationalism. Among the Catalan nationalists, four narratives emerged that criticise the change in lyrics: that anthems are unchangeable, that the change in lyrics is ahistorical, that the connection between nationalism and political correctness is something to ridicule, or that feminism is foreign to Catalonia.

The first narrative focused on the text and function of the anthem. An anthem is supposed to be immutable. Therefore, it should not be changed to suit recent political trends. One commentator remarked: "Of course, why don't we change an anthem, which represents a lot, every year? Especially if it's with nonsense like this, how stupid, by God. Pathetic" (Pau Iglesias2 on the video posted by La Vanguardia 2021).

Not only should an anthem not be changed, but especially introducing inclusive language constitutes an unworthy change. Another example of this was commentator who took issue with the eponymous "segadors" of the anthem now being reserved exclusively for women. If it had to be changed, they said, it should have been to "segadors i segadores" (notwithstanding the fact that such a change in lyrics would not fit the melody of the anthem).

The second narrative focussed on the supposed ahistoricity of the change in lyrics. Commentators contend that were no women reapers fighting against Castilian troops in 1640. Moreover, by speaking of "segadores", the commentators

claimed that the men who fought were being erased: "Thousands of reapers risked everything, and many lost their lives to improve the lives of their children, to now be invisibilised" (Eduardo ci on the video posted by La Vanguardia 2021).

They assert that to imply that women fought in the revolt that "Els Segadors" chronicles is to falsely insert them somewhere they have no place:

> It is called "Els Segadors" because the heroes who went and defended our homeland were mostly BOYS, this is not being sexist nor inclusive, it's being faithful to our history and to thank the millions of Catalans who defended our houses against the abusive Spanish Royal house (Eric Lopez on the video posted by La Vanguardia 2021).

The commentators negated even the possibility of women's contribution to the story that Catalonia commonly tells about its history. If Catalan identity is defined through its struggle against Spain (as all national symbols that we have described above assert), and women have no place in this struggle, then women, by extension have no place in Catalonia. Where taking attention away from men (even for a second) is constructed as erasing them, no contribution of women to the nation can ever be uncovered, and so the masculine nature of national history and remembrance is secured.

The third strand of comments that incorporates both nationalism and gender as topics focuses on the "political correctness" of the change. As one commentator writes: "It's a competition to see who is the most progressive" (Barti Yo2 on the video posted by La Vanguardia 2021).

Others mock the gender sensitive language that is implied in the rejection of the generic masculine of Sare's performance. They speak of "el/la/le/li/lo/lu President/a/e/i/o/u" (mfs1714 on the video posted by La Vanguardia 2021) or "Els/les/los/lis/lus/las segadores/is/es/us/as/os" (Barti Yo1 on the video posted by La Vanguardia 2021). These comments go more in the direction of mocking feminist and LGBT+ movements.

Lastly, commentators figured feminism as a foreign invasion to Catalonia. This was evident in comments who suggested that, next time, instead of performing the nation with inclusive language, a singer should perform it in Castilian or Arabic. Another wrote: "Out with this ridiculous feminism, now it's enough of this bullshit. Long live free Catalonia" (David Soler on the video posted by La Vanguardia 2021).

"Long live free Catalonia" ("Visca Catalunya lliure") is a phrase normally attached to pro-independence demonstrations and claims, often also abbreviated to "visca" as a form of national self-affirmation. The freedom from Spain is implied. In this case, however, the previous phrase demanding the expulsion of feminism from Catalonia ties this phrase implying freedom from Spanish domination to freedom from feminism.

When commentators did not make their opposition to the change in lyrics explicit but simply referred to their dislike of the song in general, we did not code "gender" as a topic. Because of this, we are likely underestimating the actual number of comments linking the change in lyrics to their dislike of the song.

There are few positive comments that focus on the gendered aspect. We briefly want to draw attention to one interesting facet of them. When praising the change in lyrics, two commentators connected the inclusiveness of the gender dimension to a notion of the universal, and the hope that with gender divisions, borders between nations could also be overcome, for example when one commentator writes: "It would be a dream come true for genders and nations to understand each other" (Olga Quibus on the video posted by Rising Caledonia 2021).

Even these positive comments place an inclusive stance on gender in opposition to nationalism. They equate the inclusion of women in the nationalist project with a broader weakening of the harsh border logic that nationalism dictates. Not only does a nationalist stance and advocating for Catalonia seem to necessitate a masculine dominance, as the above commentators have argued. An inclusion of women also implies a softening of borders.

These comments show that there is a connection between gender and nationalism in Catalonia, one that some people feel quite strongly. This connection was first made in the time of Prat de la Riba, who established a vision of Catalan society where a proper gender order ensured the continuity of Catalonia. For one of the founding fathers of Catalan nationalism, the land was a nourishing mother that would ensure Catalonia's survival and renewal, even in dark times. The land also plays a key role in the national anthem. Prat de la Riba's writings charged the images contained in the anthem with gendered meaning, especially in relation to the land and who should defend it. These notions continue to permeate this national symbol, as the intervention of Sare reveals. Some who disliked the anthem focused on the Catalan nature of the anthem or the feminism of the act as such. However, there was a subset of commentators that figured their dislike of the feminist change specifically through a nationalist lens. The performance of a national anthem during an inauguration is a regular occurrence, one that might best fall under what Billig (1995: 6) termed "banal nationalism". The feminist change of lyrics is anything but regular. It disturbs the naturalness of the nation by visibilising and interrupting the linkage between masculinity and nation. This change is unacceptable for those strands of Catalan nationalism build their national identity on the historical connection between their nationalism and its gendered images of society.

## 6 DISCUSSION

Using YouTube comments to capture a public debate certainly sets one up for finding a particular kind of discourse. As Peter Schultes, Verena Dorner, and Franz Lehner (2013: 659) note: "User comments are the most popular but also extremely controversial form of communication on YouTube". This makes a study of YouTube comments a most-likely-case for finding a reactionary nationalist discourse that is in opposition to the feminist impulse behind Sare's change in lyrics. YouTube comment sections, but other social media platforms as well, are strategically utilised discourse spaces. Especially in the case of "hot-button" issues such as feminism or gender sensitive language, the risk of "trolls" is significant. Users with malicious intent can alter the tone of the discourse, and "crowd out" productive conversations (Tanchak 2017: 260). Therefore, any examination of online discourses can only be the beginning, not the end of an inquiry into the gendered nature of Catalan nationalism.

There is also the question of the representativeness of the discourse. Why should YouTube comments be representative of real-world discussion? Mandie Iveson (2019: 291) points out that a nation is created through discursive interaction, and that such a process in Catalonia is crucial to the independence process. Since the events under study here took time during the Covid-19 pandemic, online exchange took on an even more important role as being one of the few spaces where people could discuss topics with strangers. Therefore, the likelihood that people who wanted to attend the event or express an opinion about it would turn to online forms of participation was likely much higher than it would have been in a pre-pandemic situation.

For a nationalist project that sets itself up in the tradition of emancipatory nationalisms and oftentimes also in opposition to a more regressive Spanish nationalism, our findings are noteworthy.

Not all of Catalan nationalism sees feminism and inclusiveness as constitutive of Catalan national identity. This runs counter to Catalan self-representation as a modern, liberal, and progressive nation. Through national symbols, gendered hierarchies remain preserved in the national consciousness, and challenge attempts at formulating an inclusive liberal identity based on national belonging.

## 7 CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this paper, we asked: how do the notions of masculinity that used to mark national progress and liberalism now constrain a re-framing of Catalonia as feminist and liberal? Our analysis has shown us the extent to which Catalan nationalism utilised gendered images to construct a proper social order and national destiny for Catalonia. These images entered Catalan self-articulation as Catalonia prepared to enter a world of liberal nations, though their desire was ultimately forestalled. The aftermath of European imperialism characterised this world of liberal nations. Belonging to the illustrious club, one had to claim and prove one's civilisation, racial purity, and therefore, one's masculinity. Catalonia claimed all of these attributes while depicting Spain as backwards, degenerate, and inherently African, thus exhibiting the wrong kind of masculinity. They inscribed these ideas in their national symbols and discourses.

Nowadays, Catalan nationalism also presents itself as liberal, but the conditions for what counts as liberal have changed. Catalonia seeks to illustrate its progressiveness through feminism (among other things). However, the shadow of imperial masculinity looms large within liberalism. Through national symbols, masculinity transposed itself into the grammar of 21st century Catalan identity. In that sense, liberalism's past limits its own future as the project of progress it claims to be.

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