

SECOND READER THESIS REVIEW FORM

Name of the Student	Beatrice Giovannoni
Date of Submission	June 21, 2023
Title of the Thesis	Speaking for the 'right' women: radical-right populism and women's representation in the European Parliament
Reviewer Name / Affiliation	Toni Rodon

PLAGIARISM STATEMENT

Is the thesis in your assessment free of plagiarism? Plagiarism was not detected.

KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

(relevance of the research question, research objective, literature review)

This MA dissertation examines whether the populist radical right (PRR) in the European parliament constructs in their discourses a particular view of women and feminism. As the thesis rightly states in the introduction, it has often been assumed that the PRR mainly uses an anti-feminist political rhetoric and agenda and, in doing so, they do not defend the interests of women. Departing from this assumption, this thesis explores the feminist arguments as expressed by the PRR, digging into whether these parties also employ feminism to defend the interests (preferences) of women. This constitutes an interesting topic, both academically and politically, and the thesis makes a good effort to show it.

The literature review is correct, and all major works are cited and properly discussed. The writing often touches debates and topics that are later not analyzed, such as the question of intersectionality, which makes it often a bit hard to follow. However, the discussion is both comprehensive, but also identifies the gaps in the literature (in fact, often too many gaps are mentioned).

The same applies to the theoretical part, with perhaps an important omission: in these parts different views on how the PRR approach the feminist issue are discussed, but we are missing a bit more discussion on the mechanisms, that is, an explanation about why the PRR has an interest in emphasizing the substantive representation versus others.

ANALYSIS

(methodology, argument, theoretical backing, appropriate work with sources)

The Research Design is correctly explained and thorough. The method (thematic analysis) is correct, although two caveats need to be emphasized: First, retrieving debates that contained keywords such as gender or women introduces a selection bias into the analysis that might miss other debates where an alternative vision is offered. In other words, the conclusions reached in the thesis might be because PRR knew the debate was on gender-related issues and therefore pursued a different strategy. Second, I understand the need to restrict the analysis to three themes (two, given that the ambiguous is a mixed of topics), but this often goes against the theoretical rationale explained in the theory/objectives. For instance, substantive claims is a broad category that might include a variety of topics not always well connected to each other. In addition, as it is explained in the thesis, the alternative of substantive is descriptive, which is missing in the analysis. Finally, the category illiberal claims stands out as being too separate from the theoretical discussion. We know from previous works that these parties express illiberal views, and in my view what was interesting in this thesis was to analyse whether they link substantive (or descriptive) feminist narratives to illiberal (or liberal views). This is not entirely what the thesis does.

CONCLUSIONS

(persuasiveness, link between data and conclusions, achievement of research objectives)

The thesis is persuasive, and it makes an important effort to achieve the research objectives. Besides what I mentioned before, the reading of the data often misses some aspects, such as a relative point of comparison. For instance, the thesis states “Out of the 35 plenary debates considered in this study, only 26 include claims advanced by PRR MEPs that adopt feminist arguments to represent women”. An alternative interpretation is that, given the conventional wisdom that the PRR avoids these issues, in most of them feminist arguments were included. Furthermore, the number of substantive claims tends to be on average low (1, 2, etc) in single speeches. This means that the other claims are related to something else.

FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

(appropriate language, adherence to academic standards, citation style, layout)

The language is appropriate, and citations are correct.

The empirical analysis could have been simplified. It is a bit long and some information perhaps could have been moved on the appendix or merged.

SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

(strong and weak points of the thesis, other issues)

The strongest parts of this MA dissertation are the research objective (it tackles a question we still do not know much about), the literature review and some conclusions.

The weakest part is the empirical analysis, especially the selection of themes and their connection to the theory.

FORMAL REQUIREMENTS

(for example, word count)

21,698 words. 5 tables and 12 figures.

(See below for grading scheme and grading descriptor)

Grade (1 – 10)	8.5/9 (UPF). Percentile B, 7.5-8.4 (Leiden)
Date	Reviewer Signature

2 – 3 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR THESIS DEFENCE

1.	What are the implications for your results of your sampling strategy—choosing ‘women’ and ‘gender’ as keywords?
2.	According to the findings, substantive representation claims dominate in most debates. To what extent is this simply a rhetorical device by PRR?
3.	