

De l'humanisme rhénan du XVI^e siècle au campus européen du XXI^e siècle.

Département d'études	
scandinaves	faculté des
langues	Université
de Strasbourg	

Strasbourg, le 6 juin 2023

Thesis assessment mgr Dominika Bartnik-Świątek

Mgr Dominika Bartnik-Świątek proposes a doctoral dissertation on *Nordic Lite. Constructing the Nordic Region and Nordicness in Polish and French Women's Magazines in the XXI Century* under the supervision of professor Kazimierz Musiał at the University of Gdansk. It is a pleasure for me as a professor of Scandinavian Studies in Strasbourg to be asked to participate in the assessment. However, out of obvious reasons, my assessment will be informed by my fields of expertise and the lack of certain, most evidently my incapacity to read and understand Polish, and by way of consequence to evaluate Dominika Bartnik-Świątek capacity to discuss and interpret both the state of the art in Polish language research and the Polish cultural contexts of the subject of her thesis. In fact, the study seeks to compare the construction of Northerness in Polish and French Women's Magazines in comparison. I will thus focus on the general setup of the study, methodology and the French perspective.

The aim of the study is, as suggested, to analyse the "images of the Nordic region encapsulated in frames" (p. 52) used in Polish and French journalism, focusing on the major frames of interpretation to be identified in the press. The notion of "image" is often used synonymously with "representation", as Dominika Bartnik-Świątek is rather guided by representation theory (p. 15). Additionally, she focusses rather on text analysis than on image analyses, since, as she interestingly remarks, the photos and images used in the press "mainly have an illustrative function and are often taken from the photo banks" (p. 46), and thus not produced specifically for the content. However, one might wonder whether the implicit question of authenticity, i.e. the creation of the illustration in the place in Scandinavia that is the subject of a particular article, is important and whether it even concerns the written articles. In other words, why is it not important for the reader to have specially produced visual content? And what does this say about the status of "reality" of the analysed articles in general? Unfortunately, these issues are only touched on in passing.

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Dominika Bartnik-Świątek analyses a corpus of 423 articles from three Polish and three French Women's magazines, 151 Polish and 272 French (p.48). They are derived from the online versions of the magazines, identified through research of the archives with a number of keywords related to Scandinavia. The metadata was entered into a database, the structure of which was developed by the candidate and is presented in the appendix. In the perspective of open science, it would be interesting to provide access to the database respectively the data tables to help future researchers in this area and to provide an insight into the fundamental work of data generation done by the candidate.

The candidate recapitulates the history of women's magazines in Poland and France and the economic situation of each of the analyzed magazines and has some reflections on the specificity of the journalistic text. However, very little attention is paid to the specific mediality of the online version of magazines - how is a text in a magazine different from one in an online version? Title stories, covers etc. do function quite differently in both media. In fact, texts are often adapted to the specific reading habits on the screen. They are often shorter and have more images. Commentary sections permit not seldom to interact and read what others think about an article. The centrality of an article to an issue of a magazine is more important than its up-to date status. It would have been good to reflect on this and include it in the analysis. A study of the form of the magazine as an online medium would have been beneficial to the study (how are top stories marketed? How is the content adapted to the reader, e.g. by suggesting related articles? Is there access to the print version as a pdf and how are they different? etc.). It would have been good to have numbers of comparison to be able to situate the importance of the Nordic for the content in general. If an identification of the total number of articles published in the period in the magazine was not possible out of technical reasons, this could have been done by case studies - for example six different issues of the magazines at six different moments in time.

The thesis is structured around three major chapters. After the introduction that mainly serves to set the research question and corpus, Ms. Bartnik-Świątek devotes about 35

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pages to her theoretical and methodological approach. Chapter 3 deals with the historical and cultural background of the representations used in the magazines (20 pages), before the actual analysis begins in Chapter 4 (about 90 pages). A short summary concludes the work. Accordingly, the text section comprises about 170 pages including illustrations. The work is concluded by an extensive bibliography.

The theoretical approach is mostly inspired by Bourdieu, field theory, representation theory and frame analysis. It is especially informed by Polish research; international or French is mentioned only partially when it comes to the major research field in question, that is the study of the representation / imagology of the North. This is rather unfortunate as it has been rather active in the last years. To mention just some examples: the studies at the German research center *imaginatio borealis*, Peter Fjågesund's *Dream of the North*, Kristinn Schramm's *Borealism*, not to speak of works in Strasbourg and Paris the last years. Some of the publications are mentioned, but not used or rejected in some way. This could have been of theoretical interest; especially as several studies on magazines have been published (Laurence Rogation, Simon Théodore). Daniel Chartier's important studies of the last years, especially his *Qu'est-ce que l'imaginaire du Nord? Principes éthiques* would be an important reference. Sumarlídi Ísleifsson and Daniel Chartier general images are mentioned (p.66), but not used for the analysis: Do these images reoccur in the analyzed articles? When not, why not? If yes, why? Or did they change?

A good idea was to structure the work around metaframes that can be identified as the main themes related to the representation of the North in the corpus, i.e. "Region of Haute Cuisine", "Nordic Oasis", "Symbolic Capital of Royal Families and Celebrities", "Cultural Capital of the North", "Social Capital between Utopia and its Deconstructions", "Lifestyle, Style and Design". The different chapters show in exemplary studies how they are articulated in specific articles in all six magazines. All quotations are translated – as far as I can see for the French texts in a good quality. They give a good overview over the type and style of texts that can be found in these popular media. In this chapters, I would have liked to have seen a more thorough discussion of the differences - or not - between the different magazines in one or the other country. It now seems to me that

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the result of the study is that there are no major differences except in the number of articles and perhaps the focus on specific meta-frames.

Overall, the study provides a good overview of the representations of the North in women's magazines in both Poland and France, and opens up a field of research that is all too often neglected by scholars. It proves that the candidate has a thorough knowledge of the relevant theory and knows how to apply it to a methodologically created corpus. I hope that the results will encourage the candidate and other scholars to further develop the field opened here.

I am in favour of admitting the thesis delivered by mgr Dominika Bartnik-Świątek to further stages of the procedure and examination towards obtaining the doctoral degree in cultural studies.

Strasbourg, 6th of June 2023



Thomas Mohnike