**REVIEW**

of the dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the educational and research degree of *Doctor of Philosophy*

**in the Sphere of HE 2. Humanities; Area of professional qualification 2.1. Philology (Ancient and West European Literature: Ancient Greek Literature)**

Dissertation topic:

**Modes of Madness in Ancient GreekLliterature (VIII-V centuries BC): Genre and Artistic Functions**

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Examiner: **Professor Cleo Protokhristova, DHabil, PhD**

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Following Order № РД-38-491 from 23. 07. 2024 of the Rector of Sofia University St Kliment Okhridski I have been appointed a member of the Academic Review Board to provide a procedure for the defense of the dissertation work of PhD student Boryana Chomakovska, supervised by assoc. prof. Nevena Panova.

The dissertation presented for defense, with a volume of 226 pages, 199 of which constitute the main text, and a bibliography that includes 159 titles, is by its nature a thematic study, the purpose of which is to search for and systematize the available articulations of the manifestations of madness in ancient Greek literature from the period VIII - V c. B.C. Beyond the provision of empirical material necessary to achieve the goal thus defined, the doctoral student sets herself the task of subjecting the described delusional states to an analysis, with the help of which to eventualy identify the individual modes of madness and classify them, while revealing their specific artistic role for the works, in which they are presented. The final result of these analytical observations is the construction of a kind of dictionary composed of the sought-after designations of madness (34 in number). An additional commitment that the doctoral student states is to take the discovered names out of the context of Antiquity and read them in the light of current psychiatric competences.

The research is directed towards the implementation of the program thus indicated by the understanding of the divine origin of madness specific to the ancient Greek culture, stated in the text as a working hypothesis, while at the same time looking for examples of its being caused by human action or its interpretation as a disease state. In connection with this request, I have a hard-to-overcome resistance towards the formulation of such a hypothesis, since at hand is an widely accepted statement, stabilized in classical philology, if not otherwise, then at least thanks to the christomatically famous study of E. Dodds from 1959, "The Greeks and the Irrational", where the idea of ​​the belief of the Hellenes in "psychic intervention" by the gods, intensively demonstrated in the Homeric epic, is developed sufficiently clearly and convincingly. In the perspective of the long-held attitude that the character and behavior of people should be explained in terms of knowledge, the opposition *noos* - *thymos* is presented as fundamental, with the help of which Dodds explains the genesis of this belief.

The composition of the dissertation is in accordance with the tasks set. Comprised of an introduction, seven chapters, a conclusion, two appendices, a bibliography, an index of commented passages and a list of scientific contributions, it reflects the route of the research, oriented according to the genre definition of the studied texts - epic, lyric, Attic tragedy, old Attic comedy, historiography and philosophy, and already in the separate groups - by authors and in accordance with the chronology. In the thus constructed slender and logical scheme, the presence of the text from Ovid's "Metamorphoses", dedicated to Medea, which neither linguistically nor in terms of genre matches the material stated as the object of the study, seems not entirely defensible, especially since no attempt has even been made to subject Ovid’s interpretation to a comparative analysis that would possibly justify the deviation. I also believe that some rationale for the selection of the particular texts under study would be helpful. Because, at least to me, it is not clear why the selection does not include, for example, Sophocles' tragedy *Trachiniae*, which offers excellent material on the topic of the dissertation.

The exposition follows the established plan, alternating the citation of the examples relevant to the studied topic and their commentary, subordinated to the task of identifying the causes that led to the state of insanity. The merit of the author is mainly reduced to the extraction of the relevant names and their subsequent systematization. In fact, the doctoral student herself sees her attempt to classify the modes of madness as one of her main scientific contributions. I tend to evaluate the accompanying analysis as rather formal, as the main part of the observations follow a direction traced by already available research on the subject, in which the impression is imposed of an unbalanced, excessive amount of citations from the used theoretical sources. Often, the exposition is mainly reduced to references to one or another previous study on the subject, connected with a very scarce own commentary.

In general, the choice of authors whose scientific theses legitimize the logic of one's own production is relevant and the use of their works is productive. However, I have serious reservations about trusting Foucault's theory, since, derived predominantly from an analysis of later civilizational practices, it is not entirely applicable to the material with which the dissertation is being worked on.

Individual insufficiently substantiated interpretations make an impression. Such, for example, is the insistent qualification of Andromache as “raging bacchanalian” („*полудялата като вакханка Андромаха, очакваща с надежда завръщането на Хектор*“, p. 13; „*Андромаха, полудяла като вакханка, очаква с надежда завръщането на своя любим*“, p. 38; „*Андромаха е една pбеснуваща вакханка, когато се страхува за живота на любимия си*.“, с.188; furthermore pp. 16, 28, etc.). The characterization of her in the Twenty-second Canto of the *Iliad* as *μαινάς*, rendered concrete in translation as "robust woman, maenad, bacchanal", is cited as evidence, supported by the textual evidence of her "madness", which is however inconclusive: "she trembles all over, her heart leaps in her chest, her legs go numb. She prays that no bad news reaches her ears. She is afraid that Achilles will take the life of her beloved. the bacchanal-mad Andromache, waiting with hope for Hector's return.” (p. 16) Even more unacceptable is the logic in a subsequent reference to Andromache's “madness”. "Hector is already killed by Achilles, the finale of the Iliad is approaching, but Andromache first waits with hope for her husband, gradually realizes that she is mistaken (and misjudgment is often the basis of madness) and goes mad like a bacchanal - some are also presented physical symptoms accompanying the experience of particularly strong emotions." (p. 28) I am also not convinced by the interpretations of Ajax's and Medea's fainting states.

I also take the liberty of objecting to the manner in which the sources in question are handled in the dissertation. In most cases some claim presented as one's own is 'supported' by reference to previous research (for example, 'Ringer also confirms our claim', p. 90; or 'Boysen also comments on the state of the poet and the rhapsode, defining it as an enthusiastic and mad moment of creation', p. 169). Such a practice, which is unfortunately more and more categorically imposed as a "common place" in current academic writing, is grossly inconsistent with the principles of ethics in research.

I do not see the thesis of the thematizations of madness in ancient Greek literature as "early medical reflection on the illness of the spirit" as provable. It is also problematic to qualify the observed manifestations of madness in ancient Greek texts according to modern psychiatric diagnoses (for example, the recognition of depression in Medea's behavior).

The text of the dissertation contains a series of inaccuracies that create a negative impression - starting with the request that the scope of the study is the period from the VIII to the V century, inconsistent with the presence of Plato's dialogues, which remain outside its range, through incorrect wording (e.g. "Ajax's disease we may call a 'rabid disease' sent by the goddess of madness".), references to sources in which a misunderstanding is apparent as a result of incomplete translations with the marks of a platform aid. (e.g. „*Боговете са в повечето случаи основните виновници за лудостта. Гневното божествено внимание само по себе си, подобно на лудостта, е нещо, от което трябва да се срамуваме. Срамът трогва отхвърления скитник и лудия ум. Аякс се срамува от лудите си действия. Орест е физически отблъскващ, но физическото му състояние изразява отблъскването и будещата страх неговата лудост сама по себе си. Лудостта е отблъскваща за нормалното общество. Този, който е преминал през нея, очаквано е засрамен*“ – Padel 1995: 114), and to unaccomplished, often and practically incomprehensible syntactic constructions (e.g. „*Медея обаче казва, че няма чак такава сила (а и вероятно не може да загуби по-скоро от предопределеното Язон) и затова предлага с помощта на своите умения да удължи живота на Езон с помощта на Хеката*“, p. 105), or annoying, completely non-functional repetitions of the same descriptions and statements (the example of the commentary on "Ajax" is sufficient, where it is repeatedly reported that in his blindness he killed oxen instead of warriors).

To one degree or another, the wording of the contributions is problematic. Qualifications of the type "the first Bulgarian academic study" have long been invalid, because in the current information situation, any scientific work, engaged in ancient Greek literature, is obliged to take into account the existing state of the problem and measure up to it. Taking credit for considering the notion of madness not "in itself" but "within and within the context of each genre" doesn't sound serious. And the attempts at contextualization themselves, as already indicated, are too unconvincing. There is no understanding of the diachronic nature of the research literature and the resulting disparity in the ways in which notions of mental disorder operate in either the exposition or the conclusion, which is more of a summary. In the most schematic and in need of further argumentation variant (which cannot be provided within the limits of a review), the distance between epic poetry and tragedy, for example, manifests itself in the displacement of the opposition *noos* and *thymos*, valid for the Homeric world, from the structuring of tragedy opposition to *ethos*, understood as a stable, inviolable state of mind, and *pathos* - the disturbed, disordered state of mind, closely related to its motivation - *amartia*, often similarly caused by *hubris*, but to a much lesser extent than its negative consequences manifested in epic poetry.

Reasonably, the analysis of the main lexical units used to denote madness and its formation as a dictionary is highlighted as a contribution of the dissertation. However, I am not convinced by the stipulation that only the "most frequently used" ones are included in the dictionary, because I can't find any information on the frequency of use found. I am also puzzled that the dictionary does not include *athe*, the word used in the Iliad for Agamemnon's state of divine blindness, which led to his conflict with Achilles and the fateful "wrath of Achilles Peleus", the euphemism Dodds uses as a foundation for developing his thesis about the Homeric hero's belief in an external force that caused his inappropriate behavior. And it is that same external force onto which the epic hero could have projected the unbearable sense of shame.

Reservations were already shared regarding the, in the words of the author, "current comparisons between the ancient Greek and the modern conception of madness." That "for the first time a modern psychiatric diagnosis (where possible) of the modes of madness in ancient Greek literature has been made ", "for now in the form of separate notes", should be more of a warning sign, and the request that "thus giving a new field for future research" definitely does not meet the norms of scientific writing.

I find also a deficit of evidence for the public effectiveness of the dissertation. There are only three publications on the subject. The list of conference participations looks more convincing, but it provokes the impression that in the majority of cases the reports were given at Medical Universities (in Pleven and Plovdiv). In fact, two of the three publications are actually reports from these same conferences. It would be appropriate for the research to be tested in an environment of experts in the field of classical philology and especially with specialists in ancient Greek literature.

Regardless of my observations and disagreements, I am inclined to accept that the merits present in the research carried out by the PhD student meet the established requirements for a doctoral thesis and are sufficient to legitimize her PhD thesis aspirations. That's why I recommend **Boryana Borislavova Chomakovska** be awarded the educational and research degree of *Doctor of Philosophy* in the **2.1. Philology (Ancient and West European Literature:)** area of higher education, PhD programme **Ancient Greek Literature**, and would vote in support of this suggestion.

October, 5th 2024 Examiner:

Prof. Cleo Protokhristova