

REVIEW

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regarding a doctoral thesis for awarding the educational and scientific degree of Doctor in the Field of higher education 2. *Humanities*, Professional field 2.1. *Philology, Literature of the Peoples of Europe, America, Africa, Asia and Australia (Roman Literature)*

Author of the dissertation: Mina Petrova Petrova, doctoral student (part-time PhD program) at the Department of Classics, Faculty of Classical and Modern Languages, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," supervised by Prof. Anastas Gerdzhikov, PhD.

Topic of the dissertation: "Medical Motifs In Augustan Elegiac Poetry"

I. Information about the candidate and the procedure

Mina Petrova graduated from The National School for Ancient Languages and Cultures "Saint Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher". She holds a bachelor's degree in Classical Philology and a master's degree in Ancient Literature and Culture from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". She is currently a senior lecturer in Latin and medical terminology at the Medical University of Sofia, Department for Language and Sport. She is a doctoral student in the Department of Classical Philology at Sofia University with Prof. Anastas Gerdzhikov, PhD, as her academic advisor. All necessary documents and materials related to the procedure have been submitted. The administrative and procedural requirements of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff, the Regulations for its implementation and the Regulations on the terms and conditions for obtaining scientific degrees and employment to academic positions in Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“ have been complied with.

II. Publications on the topic of the dissertation

Mina Petrova is the author of several reports related to the topic of the dissertation, presented at national and international forums and published in the proceedings of scientific conferences in Bulgaria and abroad. Three of them are presented in connection with the procedure.

III. Dissertation and abstract

Mina Petrova's dissertation is 288 pages long and has the following structure: Introduction (pp. 7-39), main text consisting of four chapters (pp. 40-249), Conclusion with contributions (pp. 250-262) and Bibliography (pp. 263-288), with the following subdivisions: 1) source publications (104 titles); 2) cited secondary literature mainly in English and Bulgarian and a more limited

number of works in German, Italian, French, and Spanish (a total of 287 titles); and 3) online platforms with digitized resources (30 titles). The bibliography demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the literature on the subject, including the most recent works from 2024 and 2025.

The Introduction first examines the relevance of the topic in relation to the emerged niche for “implementing a new approach in the study of the intersections between medical language, concepts, and theories with Roman literature”, marked by the academic circle *Body and Medicine in Latin Poetry* (2020). The aims are clarified: 1) to carry out an in-depth analysis of the diachronic development and transformations of the selected poetic motifs, and 2) to link these motifs to the field of medicine. The research concept is based on the idea of “love as a disease”, which “provokes the presence of the abstraction of medicine in elegy” (p. 28). The two bodies of original texts are presented in great detail (pp. 35-39): **the first** is a corpus of elegiac works, referred to as *central*, with a comprehensive justification for the inclusions and exclusions of certain works, and **the second** is a corpus of a wide range of medical writings with an explanation of the criteria for their selection. The chosen methodology corresponds to the scientific tasks set, which are in line with the objectives (p. 12), and supports the comprehensive analysis and definition of objective conclusions in the course of the research. The use of an anachronistic approach when working with medical sources is convincingly argued and, on one hand, shows the doctoral student's in-depth knowledge of the subject matter, and on the other, adds additional illustrative value to the dissertation.

The Introduction provides a detailed overview of the current state of research on the topic and analyzes the sources. The introductory section includes a summary of the chapters, which serves as a guide to the topic and sets appropriate expectations for the content of the work.

Chapter II examines the elegiac motif of the fading body, represented through names and tropes of weakness. The connection between love and wasting away is compared to patterns of the motif in Hellenistic poetry and reexamined as a reflection of ancient physiological and medical theories. An intriguing part of this chapter is the elegiac aspects of physical exhaustion and the symbolic localization of erotic suffering in the bone structures.

Chapter III establishes parallels between the projections of nutrition and sleep in elegiac poetry and ancient medical dietetics. The first part of the chapter analyzes the medical uses of wine and food in elegy, while the second part focuses on the antithesis of sleep and insomnia in line with the ancient medical understanding of sleep as a consequence of eating. In this way, the very structure of the chapter further emphasizes the search for parallels between the motifs of “vital processes” (p. 39) and the theses of ancient medicine.

Chapter IV explores love as a somatic illness based on elegiac motifs, reflecting the connection between love and appetite. The erotic dynamic is revealed through images of digestive reactions, represented by motifs of erotic loss of appetite, its gradual transformation into a feeling of satiety and disgust, the elegiac *remedia amoris*, and the establishment of parallels with pathological conditions and therapies from the writings of ancient medical authors.

Chapter V aims to enrich the “pathology and physiology of passion” with a female elegiac perspective by introducing gynecological themes – the motifs of pregnancy, abortion, childbirth,

and motherhood, which, according to Mina Petrova, are fundamentally foreign to the “established erotic order of elegy” (p. 203). The elegiac female characters, called *puellae*, represent the genre's “preserved archetype of the maiden or seductress” (p. 203), woven from sexual desire, devoid of any connotations of fertility and reproduction. It is an interesting assumption that the introduction of gynecological motifs in Ovidius represents an attempt to transition from an elegiac to a tragic tone in the poet's work.

The conclusion of the study summarizes the extensive analysis of the source material and the formulated conclusions.

The author's endeavor to offer her own interpretation of certain motifs, different from the findings of previous researchers, leaves a favorable impression. Such an example is the proposed interpretation of Ovidius' visualizations of the *medulla* as the main center for the perception of female pleasure (p. 253), namely that “the poet actually emphasizes the idea that female pleasure possesses a deeper sensuality and intensity” (p. 253).

The abstract meets the formal requirements and comprehensively and accurately presents the structure and content of the dissertation, the conclusions, and its scientific contributions.

IV. Main scientific contributions of the dissertation

- ancient literary texts, subjected to philological analysis, are compared with topoi and concepts drawn from ancient philosophical, scientific, and medical literature.
- a medical interpretation of a corpus of elegiac concepts, excerpts and entire poems, in which medical allusions have been identified, has been made.
- a classified exposition of elegiac constructions, which have not yet been systematically studied in their role as motifs, is proposed.
- the reading and interpretation of medical imagery in elegiac poetry is enriched, and an increasingly in-depth focus is placed on physicality, emotions, and pathology;
- for the first time numerous medical sources have been translated into Bulgarian, forming a small corpus of ancient scientific texts mainly related to issues of sexuality, dietetics, and sexual disorders.

V. Remarks and recommendations

A minor flaw is that in some places the author deviates from the use of *pluralis auctoris*, which she generally adheres to, e.g.: “In this sense, I believe that elegiac depictions of love also engage with the purely sensual side...” (p. 19).

Despite the presence of an extensive conclusion summarizing the dissertation, at the end of each chapter there should be brief and clearly formulated conclusions regarding the results of the study of specific motifs, which would help to follow the overall concept.

Some views of ancient medicine mentioned in the dissertation and their reflection in the Roman poetic context, such as the myelogenetic theory, can be useful in the doctoral student's teaching work. In this sense, we would advise her to compile a corpus of topoi excerpted from the

work with interpretations of ancient medical concepts, which would serve to increase the historical and cultural knowledge of students in medical specialties.

VI. Conclusion

The work is characterized by its impeccable structure and in-depth knowledge of the literature on the researched topic. The systematic approach to defining and arguing the corpus of elegiac works and scientific and medical literature makes a positive impression. The presentation in the individual chapters is well planned and strictly follows the logic of the intended line of argument, and the claims are well supported. The doctoral student's excellent command of terminology from both the philological field and the field of medicine should also be noted. The study is accompanied by an impressive critical apparatus.

Mina Petrova's professional interest in the history and philosophy of medicine, as well as in medical issues in general, is evident at all levels of the study: in the diversity of intertextual links with a wide range of works of ancient scientific thought, in the skillfully drawn parallels between the elegiac representations of love experiences and the medical interpretations of nosological units, pathological conditions, symptoms, and therapeutic models. The detailed commentary on the specific vocabulary used in the various texts is also of high additional value.

The dissertation is precise and meticulous. Technical imperfections – typos, oversights, etc. – are rare.

This opus meets the academic requirements for the preparation of a dissertation. It presents the author as an erudite and knowledgeable scholar with the necessary academic competences and skills. The merits of the work and the related publications give us reason to recommend without hesitation that the members of the Honorable Scientific Jury award Senior Lecturer Mina Petrova the educational and scientific degree of *Doctor*.

Varna, 06.06.2025 г.



Assoc. Prof. Nadezhda Amudzhieva