

STATEMENT

by Assoc. Prof. Pepa Petrova Lungarova, PhD - Medical University, Pleven

on the dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**"

to **Boryana Borislavova Chomakovska** – a PhD student in independent training in professional field 2.1. Philology, Literature of the Peoples of Europe, America, Africa, Asia and Australia (Ancient Greek Literature)

**Topic: Modes of Madness in Ancient Greek Literature (8th - 5th centuries BC):
Genre and Artistic Functions**

1. Procedure data

By Order No. RD-38-471/23.07.2024 of the Rector of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski I was appointed member of the scientific jury for awarding the degree of Doctor of Education and Science to Boryana Borislavova Chomakovska - PhD student in independent training in the professional field 2.1. Philosophy, Literature of the Peoples of Europe, America, Africa, Asia and Australia (Ancient Greek Literature).

At a meeting of the scientific jury on 06.08.2024 it was decided to prepare an opinion. The following materials were provided to me:

- Full text of the dissertation;
- The abstract on the mentioned topic - in Bulgarian and in English;
- Publications and participation in scientific forums on the topic of the dissertation;
- List of papers printed in proceedings of scientific forums.

The submitted set of materials is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Sofia University and in compliance with the national minimum requirements for obtaining the PhD degree, according to Art. 1 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

2. Data about the PhD student:

Boryana Chomakovska completed her secondary education at the High School for Foreign Languages in Pleven in 2002. She obtained her Bachelor's degree at St Cyril and St Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo (Bulgarian and German) in 2006, and in 2017 - a master's degree in the program in Ancient Culture and Literature at the Department of Classical Philology, Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. She has been working as a lecturer of Latin at Medical University – Pleven since April 2016 to present. Boryana Chomakovska has held the position of senior lecturer in Latin with Medical Terms at Medical University – Pleven since April 2022, teaching to Bulgarian and International students of all specialties.

3. Dissertation and abstract data

The dissertation consists of introduction, seven chapters, conclusion, two appendices, bibliography, index of commented passages, list of scientific contributions. It is 226 pages

long, of which 199 pages - main text, and 13 pages of references – 159 titles. Three publications related to the thesis are also listed.

The **Introduction** presents the motive, aim and tasks of the presented dissertation by applying the analytical method to the selected material on the topic, to identify the "modes" of "madness" in the genre-diverse ancient testimonies in Ancient Greek literature in the period of the 8th – 5th century BC and to compile a glossary reflecting the deviant behaviors of a human, a mythological character or a deity.

The current state of the problems under study is discussed in detail. The etymology and definitions of insanity and disease state in secondary literature are commented upon. The large number of psychiatric terms containing *mania* is highlighted in to locate the reflection of ancient notions in contemporary medical research and to delineate the conceptual framework of the analysis. The historiographical review traces changes in the semantics of madness as a manifestation of human behavior and as a medical term. The literary-historical nature of the dissertation defines an interdisciplinary approach that allows to identify not only the specific manifestations of madness in a literary context and their artistic functions, but also to what extent they can be related symptomatologically to actual psychiatric pathologies. The working hypotheses aimed at clarifying the origins of madness, the nature of its consequences, and the significance of unreasonable actions in achieving a certain emotional effect in the literary chronotope.

The main text is divided into six chapters according to the literary genre. Quotations from ancient Greek epic, lyric, Attic tragedy, Old Attic comedy, historiography, and philosophy are analyzed and commented upon in sequential order.

Each chapter is accompanied by a brief introduction on the characteristics of the genre, the choice of ancient evidence, and individual situations involving manifestations of madness, all of which are interwoven with the main storyline to varying degrees.

The **second chapter** directs the analysis to works by representatives of the epic genre. The descriptions and commentaries on the manifestations of madness are based exclusively on the ancient literature sources. Bartholome's description of the two types of madness, whether divine or caused by some external force, are fleshed out and linked to the parallel developing storylines in the Iliad and the Odyssey. Emphasis is laid on the madness as depicted in Acts and Days: it has no epic dimensions and is recklessness, lying, blasphemy, audacity, thereby manifesting the moralizing function in the didactic poem. The identifications achieved are tied to important juxtapositions of abnormal manifestations in fragments of Homer, historiography and lyrics.

Chapter three is very well-structured. It focuses on selected works of the lyric poets and on ancient notions of madness. Longinus's commentary on the extant excerpt from the poem containing Sappho's prayer to Aphrodite is particularly valuable not only for revealing the poet's stylistics. It also relevant to contemporary publications, presenting love as an onset of madness as a psychosomatic condition. The identifications of modes in this genre are clearly indicated in the summary.

Chapter four is devoted to madness in the works of the Attic tragedy authors. The introductory section presents Aristotle's definition of tragedy and its modern interpretations, but the analysis is based on the identifications of madness in Singer's study. In the commentary on ancient evidence, B. Chomakovska defines the states of insanity as a result of divinely-sent madness or divine intervention, the consequences of which cause short-lived delusions, loss of sanity, and misguided actions of the characters, going as far as crimes. For

some of the characters, realized madness and the irreversible damage done is a cause for shame, suffering, for self-isolation, even for suicide. Important contemporary interpretations are provided to clarify the stages through which those gripped by pernicious madness passes, the interest of the ancient man in medical terminology, and the relationship between somatic and mental health. The summary of this large chapter should have, focused on the specific identifications of the modes in which the divine and the human are intertwined, and which, provoked by divine intervention, appear to be the driving force in tragic human actions and their consequences in the storylines of the dramatic genre.

Chapter Five examines the madness in the Old Attic comedy, registered in three of Aristophanes' comedies, and comparing madness with that in tragedies. Such an approach to analysis and the appropriate use of statements from the secondary literature facilitate the two main identifications of the modes, for which modern medical terms have been proposed in the dissertation. Madness in a comedy educates through laughter and irony: it does not have a disastrous effect on the fate of characters and the painful impact as in a tragedy. In comedies, flaws and vices in human character are pointed out. Madness is defined as a "social disease", and sometimes as a beneficial false folly, as the only possible reaction in solving the social problems of an "uncured" society.

Historiography as a literary form is the subject of **Chapter Six**, which analyzes fragments of Herodotus' history. The manifestations of the characters' madness in the course of historical events are described and analyzed in detail, and their function in achieving a greater effect in the reception of the narratives is highlighted. The content in this part of the dissertation is related to contemporary research in which B. Chomakovska finds grounds for characterization of the genre and identifications of numerous human states of insanity. In the course of the analysis and in the summary, she identifies the proximity of epic and tragedy to historiography in terms of the variety of modalities and divine intervention.

The rational nature of philosophy and discussions of madness in Plato's dialogues are presented in **Chapter Seven**. The analysis traces 'rationality' as the antithesis of madness and supports Bartholome's claim for a change in the philosophical understanding of madness that would rather seek non-divine intervention in madness states and defines itself as an abnormal, morbid condition. The influence of the advances in medicine of the late 5th century BC on mental pathological states is pointed out in relation to their physical and physiological signs and the role of philosophy to cure the soul. On the other hand, commentaries on the dialogues draw conclusions about the characteristics of madness - the four types of divine madness in an ancient context, and relate poetry and philosophy to the positive effects of divine inspiration.

In **Chapter Eight**, in a way related to the previous chapter, B. Chomakovska offers an update of Plato's conception of poetic divine inspiration in the broader context of the creative act, what she calls "the madness of the creator." In the presented statements of psychiatrists and psychologists of the last centuries on the relationship between the state of human minds and their creations in fine art, the identification of genius and madness and on mental illness as a "catalyst" in creativity are emphasized - issues that provoke controversial opinions of specialists and challenge contemporary research on creative inspiration.

The **Conclusion** provides a synthesized overview of the modalities of madness identified according to their chronological manifestation in different genres. The PhD student's opinion that madness as a literary fiction with an artistic function does not allow deriving its definition from the numerous, in some cases non-repetitive, states with vague

symptomatology, as well as those induced by divine intervention is justified. The achievement of the aim and the working hypotheses is accomplished. The established classification table of the identified 14 modules is linked to differential diagnoses.

The abstract is a comprehensive synoptic of the issues studied and meets the formal requirements.

4. Contributions of the dissertation:

- a corpus of sources has been compiled, consisting of quotations of 19 ancient authors, divided into 6 groups, according to the literary genre;
- a dictionary of 34 lexemes related to the studied states of madness has been elaborated;
- a classification of the identified modalities of madness is made;
- hypothetical contemporary diagnoses to the abnormal mental states recorded in the ancient testimonies are indicated.

5. Publications and participation in scientific forums

The scientific production of B. Chomakovska is represented by participation in national and international forums with section papers and by publications in proceedings, which outline her scientific interests in the field of ancient literature, medical Latin terminology and in the study of sources. She has 3 publications on the topic of her dissertation.

6. Conclusion

B. Chomakovska applies a detailed analysis to the individual modules of "madness", examines their origins, causes and manifestations in humans to achieve identifications important for determining their genre and artistic functions. Excerpts from the works in the original and in translation are examined with comprehensive lexical commentary on the mad states described. Comments on important references to ancient Greek and Latin evidence in support of a point made by the dissertator, as well as the claims of contemporary scholars on the particular modus are included. Ancient notions and modern medical scientific explanations of abnormal mental states are juxtaposed.

As a recommendation, I would suggest editing the repetitions in the introductory and summary sections of individual chapters, as well as consistent adherence to functional stylistic norms. In Chapter Four, the term *morbus sacer* is incorrectly attributed to Hippocrates.

B. Chomakovska undoubtedly has made a first attempt to investigate the modalities of madness in ancient Greek literature and update them to some extent. The study is sound in terms of theoretical propositions, analysis and commentary on the compiled corpus and secondary literature. The merits of the dissertation and the publications related to the topic give me grounds to recommend to the members of the Honorable Scientific Jury award the degree of PhD to Boryana Chomakovska.

03.10.2024

(Assoc. Prof. Pepa Lungarova, PhD)