

## **REVIEW**

on the dissertation “**The Price of Reality and the Possible Worlds of Literature.**

**Conrad, Kafka, Camus**” by associate professor Maya Gorcheva PhD for obtaining the scientific degree “Doctor of Sciences in professional field 2.3 Philosophy, scientific area 05.01.06. Aesthetics

### **1. Problem outline. Relevance and significance**

In the dissertation by Assoc. Prof. Maya Gorcheva the construction of possible worlds as an aesthetic practice is considered by three writers of world literature of the twentieth century – Joseph Conrad, Franz Kafka, Albert Camus. The choice of these three authors is justified. First, the doctoral student has decided to dwell on them not only from a subjective point of view, but also because of what is noted in the dissertation: The work of these authors enjoys wide readers’ interest, as well as detailed specialized analyses beyond the perimeters of literary criticism. Their life path and creativity are also the subject of research in philosophy, sociology, journalism. Approaching each of them examines the attitude of the possible worlds of works of art to the socio-historical reality and their location in relation to current debates. I note that the topic is not new to Assoc. Prof. M. Gorcheva, who has dedicated many monographs, studies, articles, and papers on it at scientific conferences, etc. It should be emphasized that only on the topic of the dissertation has she seven extremely serious publications. The exposition begins with a “bang”, with questions like: How does literature speak about reality? How, while maintaining its inaccessibility, is it more sincere and true than all the spells of

public speakers? What is its power to transform and rethink the obvious? etc. In art, as well as in philosophy, questions are more important than answers. Creativity is human (mental and practical), socially significant, conscious activity, transforming the existing reality and forming a new one, having not existed before it, with the help of certain methods, forms and means for this subjective transformation. In a narrow sense, creativity is understood as an original, unique, unique activity, justified by a certain individual personal attitude.

In our time, science is increasingly answering questions related to humans and society. And Assoc. Prof. Maya Gorcheva seeks and finds answers to vital questions in and with the help of science, literature and art. Her research aims to bring out the concept of “possible world as an aesthetic concept and as a general conceptual framework for the perception of diverse texts from different fields and to show how the concept of possible world is integrated in understanding the specifics of aesthetic work.” Here it is necessary to indicate the specific purpose of the dissertation, namely to “make sense of the imaginary worlds created in aesthetic activity, through the logical-semantic concept of possible worlds.”

At the beginning of this review I declare that the emergence of a dissertation such as *The Price of Reality and Possible Worlds of Literature* is not only justified, relevant and significant, but also real, necessary and socially useful. I cannot fail to note that the author has faced the research challenge she noted in her work, which “opens” the door to the essence of the problems that are the subject of research: “The perception of today’s people or the design of utopian possibilities as real. The immersive experience relies on technological innovations to maintain the imagination. Contrary to this consumption of imaginative possibilities pre-framed in the technological product, the question arises about the limits of world-building and aesthetic practice as a generator of imaginary worlds.” Here I would like to note that immersion in culture the action of going deep can be found in western literature. The

immersive effect is actively used in cinema, theater, painting and entertainment industry. Some theaters in London offer immersion in virtual reality, where to some extent the boundaries between the real and virtual worlds are blurred. There is a fascinating theater in New York that people visit to experience simulated reality for a while. This corresponds to the main thesis, which is categorically stated by Assoc. Prof. Gorcheva: “The construction of worlds is a universal human ability, which is manifested through the creation of aesthetic works and their perception.”

## **2. Awareness of the subject area**

The proposed dissertation has a volume of 410 printed pages, with 255 bibliographic sources, divided into strictly artistic (77) and scientific and journalistic (188). Bulgarian and foreign, printed and paper are homogenized in the unified model of bibliographic description, while they are equal in reading as information resources. Many books and articles are accessible through open electronic libraries.

The dissertation consists of a business card with a general presentation “Research Framework”; Introduction; Title I with two chapters and Title II with four chapters.

I do not intend to dwell in detail on the content of each chapter, but I must note that Assoc. prof. Maya Gorcheva has outlined the peculiar and outstanding in the chosen problem area, she has marked the points around which to build and structure her work, which is in compliance with the interdependence of the considered problems; she has found the rational framework for the explanation and understanding of possible worlds.

The formulation of the topic, the object, the subject and the tasks, the presented motivation and goals, the used methods, the approach in writing the dissertation, as well as the well-motivated research tasks, which are solved one by

one and the set goal has been achieved of Maya Gorcheva. I will add that she is well aware of the relevant issues, familiar and impartially analyses the main literary and philosophical sources. The creative aspiration and attempt to propose and substantiate a complex, panoramic picture of reality and possible worlds of literature deserve high praise. I deliberately note that Assoc. Prof. Maya Gorcheva has put a “business card” with a subject, goals, etc. only in the abstract. She did not repeat the general presentation in the text of the dissertation, so that it does not become larger, but to remain more readable.

### **3. Solved tasks in the dissertation**

The exposition follows a certain scientific logic. First, the author has identified the problem to be studied; she has hypothesized the cause of the problem; proposed experiments aimed at testing the hypotheses; she has also indicated the expected results of the dissertation research.

At the very beginning of her research, Maya Gorcheva has presented the basic concepts and issues, which leads to better emphasis on and focus of thinking on the topic. In this context, it could be said that the author’s ability to enter the complex labyrinths of categorical-conceptual typologies related to the studied problem area is serious and successful, and even more to offer her own solutions.

In the dissertation, there is a correspondence between the formulated topic and the content of the work. The approach to it and the way in which the dissertation is organized are indicated in the introductory part of the paper. In it, Maya Goprcheva has clearly and categorically presented the considered problem by contextualizing it, i.e. she has answered the question, as I have already emphasized, why exactly this problem has been considered and not something else. The concept of “possible world

of logic enters the field of art, philosophy of science, linguistics, etc.” The research has attempted “its systematic presentation as a tool for understanding aesthetic creation and opening the work to social reflection and values.”

In this part she has presented the goals of her dissertation and the ways in which they will be achieved. In the dissertation work the main tasks defined at the beginning of the research have been successfully solved, which I do not find necessary to list here.

#### **4. Methodology of the research**

Research methods are traditional. In this case, they are sustainable, relevant and capable of collecting and processing the information needed to develop scientific work. Research approaches of the sociology of literature are widely used to outline the social status of the author, deterritorialization and postcolonial themes.

#### **5. On the dissertation abstract**

The presented abstract reflects fully and completely the content of the dissertation, presenting synthesized main ideas in it, as well as the results achieved.

With some clarifications and conventions, I accept the main scientific and applied contributions as formulated by the doctoral student. I will not dwell on some problem areas in the dissertation, as well as on the recommendations I have to the author, because they in no way negatively affect the indisputable scientific and creative merits of the dissertation. But still: Literature, if it is literature at all, is always connected with the individual, and therefore it is different from the general. In this context, although at the beginning of this review I note why M. Gorcheva has specifically focused on Conrad, Kafka and Camus, I would like to ask her what is in

the content of the works of the three authors that unites them and brings them together?

## **6. Conclusion**

The dissertation meets the requirements of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff, the Regulations for application of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff and the Regulations for its implementation, the Regulations on the terms and conditions for obtaining scientific degrees and holding academic positions at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Given the relevance of the problem, the contributions to the dissertation and my overall positive assessment of Maya Gorcheva, I recommend the members of the esteemed scientific jury should vote for her being awarded the degree “Doctor of Sciences” in professional field 2.3. 01/05/06 Philosophy, Scientific area Aesthetics.

Sofia

Reviewer:

(Prof. Mumun Tahirov)