

СТАНОВИЩЕ

от доц. д-р Бойка Илиева, Югозападен университет „Неофит Рилски“,
професионално направление 2.1. Филология, член на научното жури

за трудовете на гл. ас. д-р **Мария Димитрова Анастасова**

депозирани за участие в процедура по хабилитиране за заемане на академичната длъжност „доцент“ по професионално направление 2.1 Филология, научна специалност „Литература на народите на Европа, Америка, Африка, Азия и Австралия (Американска литература)“, обявен от Югозападния университет „Неофит Рилски“ в Държавен вестник N 57 / 4 юли 2023

Съответствие на процедурата на законовите изисквания

Според представените документи процедурата изпълнява изискванията на нормативната уредба в тази област. Спазени са предвидените законови срокове. Гл. ас. д-р Мария Анастасова изпълнява минималните национални изисквания за присъждане на научното звание „доцент“ със 678.5 точки, като дори ги надвишава, както е видно от приложената справка.

Обобщени данни за научната продукция и дейността на кандидата

Мария Анастасова успешно съвместява научно-изследователската си дейност с преподавателската си работа с български и чуждестранни студенти, с активното си участие в значими национални проекти, с експертната си дейност към МОН и с редактирането на академичното списание „Езиков свят“, индексирани в SCOPUS.

Автор е на 2 научни книги и 16 публикации в български и чуждестранни академични издания, от които 4 са обвързани с темата на докторската ѝ дисертация, а 1 представлява отзив за международно научно събитие. Анастасова участва в авторския колектив на 1 учебник и на 2 учебни помагала.

Научни интереси и приноси на кандидата

За участие в процедурата за заемане на академичната длъжност „доцент“ М. Анастасова е представила 1 монография, 1 учебно помагало за студенти и набор от научни публикации.

Статиите, на български и на английски език, са публикувани в български и в чуждестранни сборници и периодични издания. Те формират няколко изследователски полета – компаративистика (Стивън Кинг – Херман Мелвил, Стивън Кинг – Натаниъл Хоторн, Стивън Кинг – Едгар Алан По), теория на превода, редактиране на научни текстове, интердисциплинарни проучвания (релацията „литература – кино“), масова литература (бестселъри).

Представеното изследване „Stephen King: New Reflections and Refractions“ представлява логично продължение на дългогодишната ѝ работа върху творчеството на Ст. Кинг, на което е посветена и първата ѝ книга – „The Suspense of Horror and the Horror of Suspense“, издадена в авторитетното издателство Cambridge Scholars и радваща се на заслужено международно внимание, за което говорят и многобройните цитирания от чуждестранни изследователи.

Хабилитационният труд се фокусира върху десет романа от петата творческа декада на Стивън Кинг, която хронологически се вмества в годините между 2011 и 2021. Авторката констатира, че основен обект на изследователското внимание върху романиста в световен мащаб е предимно неговото ранно творчество. Това наблюдение задава и основната цел на обсъждания труд – да запълни съществуващия дефицит на изследвания върху късното му творчество.

Книгата има няколко основни приоритета – да изследва мястото на набелязания творчески период канона на Кинг; да установи как и доколко промененият социален контекст и новите реалности се отразяват в романите му; да проследи новите посоки в писането на Кинг по отношение на тематика, персонажи, жанрови промени, идеи и внушения.

Изследването е композирано в три глави. Първа глава предлага обзор на литературната дискусия върху Ст. Кинг, като откроява новите тенденции в неговото творчество. Втора глава е посветена на новите персонажи, класифицирани в три групи – мъже, жени и деца. Трета глава изследва измеренията на злото в новите произведения на романиста.

Бих искала да открия няколко изключително находчиви според мен изследователски решения на Мария Анастасова.

Едно от тях е проучването на женските образи, които при Кинг в повечето случаи заемат втори план. Анастасова констатира, че в доминираната от мъжки образи проза на автора в разглеждания период дори свежи и реалистични женски образи, на които се възлага значителна роля, остават в периферията на разказа (с. 49 – 50). Такъв е примерът с Ани Рос („Джойленд“) и Джийни Андерсън („Другият“), които имат важна поддържаща функция по отношение на мъжете протагонисти в съответните романи. На този фон авторката си поставя за цел да докаже, че женските образи от петата творческа декада на Кинг, въпреки че остават в сянката на неговия канон, далеч не са схематични или стереотипни. Интелигентното решение, намерено тук за обосноваване на тезата, е чрез анализа на три самобитни и доста различни персонажа – Ани Рос („Джойленд“), Сейди Дънхил („11.22.63“) и Холи Гибни (трилогията „Бил Ходжис“, „Другият“). Някои от тях се разгръщат с поддържаща функция, като значимия друг, който помага на главния мъжки герой – такива са Сейди Дънхил („22.11.63“) и Джийни Андерсън („Другият“). Други (Ани Рос, Тиа Конклин) са силни, независими и емоционално по-задълбочено представени. Трети осветляват романтичната същност на протагониста (Сейди Дънхил, Джанел Патерсън). Сред всички тях изпъква със своята самобитност запомнящата се Холи Гибни, която не се вписва в модела на нито един от женските персонажи на Кинг. Тя е дефинирана от Анастасова като „крехък мост към друг свят“ (с. 61), разгледана е като хибриден образ, съчетаващ черти на две категории обикнати от Кинг персонажи – децата и аутсайдерите.

Този своеобразен образ е класифициран като неразделна част от късния канон на Кинг – с потенциция за по-нататъшно разгръщане.

Друг много сполучлив аспект на изследването е компаративистичното разглеждане на персонажи от петата декада с протагонисти от по-ранното творчество на Кинг. Тези наблюдения са благодатни с оглед очертаването на новите тенденции при изграждането на късните герои на романиста. Така например Дан Торанс от „Доктор Сън“ е видян като версия на баща си Джек Торанс от „Сиянието“ (с. 26), романът „Джойленд“ препраща към по-ранната новела „Тялото“ (1982), протагонистът писател, пишещ под чужда самоличност Джейк Епинг (Джордж Амбърсън) от „22.11.63“ напomnia Тад Бомонт (Джордж Старк) от „Тъмната половина“ (1989), както и на Пол Шелдън от „Мизъри“ (1987). Важно наблюдение, до което достига авторката, е навлизането на криминалната тематика в новата проза на Кинг, което извежда на сцената и нови персонажи – американските служители на реда – полицаи и детективи. Те постепенно засенчват фаворизирания в ранната проза на Кинг персонаж – този на писателя.

Качествата си на добросъвестен изследовател Анастасова демонстрира чрез задълбоченото си вглеждане във всеки от зададените аспекти на изследването, интердисциплинарните препратки и ценните компаративистични анализи. Прави впечатление прецизният и широкообхватен подбор на библиографските източници, който респектира не само с обема си, но и със своята актуалност.

Заклучение

Представеният за защита хабилитационен труд е модерно и значимо изследване, и то не само за българското литературознание, но и с оглед на световното научно знание за Ст. Кинг. Бих го определила като смело и новаторско поради нелеката задача да изследва най-нови съвременни явления, без да разчита на комфорта на уталожения литературнокритически модел.

В заключение изразявам убедената си подкрепа за заемане на академичната длъжност „доцент“ от гл. ас. д-р Мария Димитрова Анастасова.

Благоевград, 26 октомври 2023 г.

Подпис:

/доц. д-р Бойка Илиева/

STATEMENT

by Associate Professor Boyka Ilieva, Ph.D, South-West University “Neofit Rilski”,
professional field 2.1. Philology, member of the scientific panel

on the works of **Chief Assistant Professor Maria Dimitrova Anastasova, Ph.D**

submitted for participation in the habilitation procedure for occupying the academic position “Associate Professor” in professional field 2.1. Philology – Literature of the Peoples of Europe, America, Africa, Asia and Australia (American Literature) announced by South-West University *Neofit Rilski* in the State Gazette, No. 57 / 4 July 2023

Compliance of the habilitation procedure with the legal requirements

According to the submitted documents, the habilitation procedure fulfills the requirements of the legal regulations in this area. The statutory deadlines have been met. Chief Assistant Professor Maria Anastasova, Ph.D. fulfills the minimum national requirements for occupying the academic position “Associate Professor”, even exceeding them with 678.5 points, as it is evident in the attached reference.

Summarized data on the candidate’s scholarly output and activity

Maria Anastasova successfully combines her research activity with teaching Bulgarian and foreign students, active participation in significant national projects, expert work at the Ministry of Education and Science, and the editing of the academic journal *Orbis Linguarum*, indexed in SCOPUS.

She is the author of 2 scholarly books and 16 academic publications published in Bulgaria and abroad, 4 of which are related to the topic of her PhD thesis, and 1 is a review of an international scientific event. Anastasova is the co-author of 1 textbook and 2 workbooks.

Research interests and contributions of the candidate

Maria Anastasova has applied for the habilitation procedure for occupying the academic position of “Associate Professor” submitting 1 monograph, 1 workbook for university students and a number of scholarly articles.

The articles, written in Bulgarian or English, have been published in Bulgarian and foreign scholarly editions and academic journals. They have outlined several fields of research interest – comparative studies (Stephen King – Herman Melville, Stephen King – Nathaniel Hawthorne, Stephen King – Edgar Allan Poe), translation theory, editing of academic texts, interdisciplinary studies (the relation “literature – cinema”), popular literature (bestsellers).

The submitted monograph *Stephen King: New Reflections and Refractions* is a logical continuation of her long-term research on Stephen King’s oeuvre, which is also the subject of her

first book, entitled *The Suspense of Horror and the Horror of Suspense* and published by the respected publishing house Cambridge Scholars Publishing. This work has attracted well-deserved international attention, as evidenced by the great number of citations by foreign researchers.

Stephen King: New Reflections and Refractions focuses on ten novels belonging to Stephen King's fifth decade of writing, which chronologically corresponds to the period between 2011 and 2021. The author points out that the main object of research attention worldwide regarding the novelist has been primarily the body of his earlier works. This observation sets the main goal of the discussed book – to fill the existing research gap regarding his late prose.

The book has several main objectives – to explore the place of the identified creative period in King's canon; to find out how and to what extent the changed social context and new reality are reflected in his novels; to trace the new directions in King's writing in terms of themes, characters, genre shifts, ideas, and interpretation.

The research is divided into three chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the scholarly discourse on Stephen King highlighting some new tendencies. The second chapter is dedicated to the new protagonists classified into three groups – men, women, and children. The third chapter examines the dimensions of evil in the novelist's most recent novels.

I would like to emphasize several research suggestions made by Maria Anastasova, which I consider extremely valuable.

One of them is the study of the female characters, who are mostly peripheral in King's recent prose. Anastasova concludes that in the typically male dominated diegesis of the discussed period, even fresh and realistic female protagonists, who perform a decisive role, somehow remain on the periphery of the story (pp. 49-50). Such is the case of Annie Ross (*Joyland*) and Jeanie Anderson (*The Outsider*), who have an important supporting function in relation to the male protagonists. On this background, the author aims to prove that although they remain in the shadow, the female characters belonging to Stephen King's fifth decade are far from schematic or stereotypical. A wise choice that has been made in order to support this thesis is the analysis of three distinctive and yet quite different characters – Annie Ross (*Joyland*), Sadie Dunhill (*11/22/63*), and Holly Gibney (the Bill Hodges trilogy, *The Outsider*). Some of them are developed as supporting characters, such as the significant other who helps the central male figure like Sadie Dunhill (*11/22/63*) and Jeanie Anderson (*The Outsider*). Others (Annie Ross, Tia Conklin) are strong, independent, and are portrayed in their emotional depth. Still others manage to reveal the romanticism of the protagonist (Sadie Dunhill, Janelle Patterson). Among them all, however, the memorable Holly Gibney stands out, as she does not fit into the typical profile of King's female heroines. She is defined by Anastasova as a “fragile bridge to another world” (p. 61) and is considered to be of a hybrid nature combining features of two of King's most beloved categories of characters – children and outsiders. This idiosyncratic image is classified as an integral part of King's late canon – with the potential for further development.

Another very successful aspect of the study is the comparative examination of characters from the fifth decade with protagonists from King's earlier works. These observations are beneficial in terms of outlining the new tendencies in the late characters' building. Dan Torrance in *Doctor Sleep*, for example, is seen as a version of his father Jack Torrance in *The Shining* (p. 26); the novel *Joyland* reveals references to the earlier novella *The Body* (1982); the protagonist writer Jake Epping, who assumes the personality of George Amberson in *11/22/63*, is reminiscent

of Tad Beaumont (George Stark) in *The Dark Half* (1989) and Paul Sheldon in *Misery* (1987). An important observation here is that part of King's most recent novels can be associated with the genre of the criminal novel, which has brought some new types of character on the stage – the American law enforcement – police officers and detectives. They seem to be gradually replacing the predominant in King's early prose character of the writer.

Anastasova's excellent qualities of a serious researcher have been demonstrated in her penetrating insight into every aspect of her study, the interdisciplinary references, and valuable comparative analyses. The precise and wide-ranging selection of bibliographic sources is impressive and it inspires respect not only with its volume but also with its relevance.

Conclusion

The monograph submitted for the habilitation procedure is a modern and significant study not only for the Bulgarian literary studies but also in the world's critical discourse on Stephen King. I would describe it as bold and innovative because of the difficult task of exploring the latest contemporary phenomena without relying on the comfort of already established models of literary criticism.

In conclusion, I would like to express my complete support for Chief Assistant Professor Maria Dimitrova Anastasova, Ph.D. regarding her occupying of the academic position of "Associate Professor".

Blagoevgrad, October 26, 2023.

Signature:

/Assoc. Prof. Boyka Ilieva, PhD/

STATEMENT

by Associate Professor Boyka Ilieva, Ph.D, South-West University “Neofit Rilski”,
professional field 2.1. Philology, member of the scientific panel

on the works of **Chief Assistant Professor Maria Dimitrova Anastasova, Ph.D**

submitted for participation in the habilitation procedure for occupying the academic position “Associate Professor” in professional field 2.1. Philology – Literature of the Peoples of Europe, America, Africa, Asia and Australia (American Literature) announced by South-West University *Neofit Rilski* in the State Gazette, No. 57 / 4 July 2023

Compliance of the habilitation procedure with the legal requirements

According to the submitted documents, the habilitation procedure fulfills the requirements of the legal regulations in this area. The statutory deadlines have been met. Chief Assistant Professor Maria Anastasova, Ph.D. fulfills the minimum national requirements for occupying the academic position “Associate Professor”, even exceeding them with 678.5 points, as it is evident in the attached reference.

Summarized data on the candidate’s scholarly output and activity

Maria Anastasova successfully combines her research activity with teaching Bulgarian and foreign students, active participation in significant national projects, expert work at the Ministry of Education and Science, and the editing of the academic journal *Orbis Linguarum*, indexed in SCOPUS.

She is the author of 2 scholarly books and 16 academic publications published in Bulgaria and abroad, 4 of which are related to the topic of her PhD thesis, and 1 is a review of an international scientific event. Anastasova is the co-author of 1 textbook and 2 workbooks.

Research interests and contributions of the candidate

Maria Anastasova has applied for the habilitation procedure for occupying the academic position of “Associate Professor” submitting 1 monograph, 1 workbook for university students and a number of scholarly articles.

The articles, written in Bulgarian or English, have been published in Bulgarian and foreign scholarly editions and academic journals. They have outlined several fields of research interest – comparative studies (Stephen King – Herman Melville, Stephen King – Nathaniel Hawthorne, Stephen King – Edgar Allan Poe), translation theory, editing of academic texts, interdisciplinary studies (the relation “literature – cinema”), popular literature (bestsellers).

The submitted monograph *Stephen King: New Reflections and Refractions* is a logical continuation of her long-term research on Stephen King’s oeuvre, which is also the subject of her

first book, entitled *The Suspense of Horror and the Horror of Suspense* and published by the respected publishing house Cambridge Scholars Publishing. This work has attracted well-deserved international attention, as evidenced by the great number of citations by foreign researchers.

Stephen King: New Reflections and Refractions focuses on ten novels belonging to Stephen King's fifth decade of writing, which chronologically corresponds to the period between 2011 and 2021. The author points out that the main object of research attention worldwide regarding the novelist has been primarily the body of his earlier works. This observation sets the main goal of the discussed book – to fill the existing research gap regarding his late prose.

The book has several main objectives – to explore the place of the identified creative period in King's canon; to find out how and to what extent the changed social context and new reality are reflected in his novels; to trace the new directions in King's writing in terms of themes, characters, genre shifts, ideas, and interpretation.

The research is divided into three chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the scholarly discourse on Stephen King highlighting some new tendencies. The second chapter is dedicated to the new protagonists classified into three groups – men, women, and children. The third chapter examines the dimensions of evil in the novelist's most recent novels.

I would like to emphasize several research suggestions made by Maria Anastasova, which I consider extremely valuable.

One of them is the study of the female characters, who are mostly peripheral in King's recent prose. Anastasova concludes that in the typically male dominated diegesis of the discussed period, even fresh and realistic female protagonists, who perform a decisive role, somehow remain on the periphery of the story (pp. 49-50). Such is the case of Annie Ross (*Joyland*) and Jeanie Anderson (*The Outsider*), who have an important supporting function in relation to the male protagonists. On this background, the author aims to prove that although they remain in the shadow, the female characters belonging to Stephen King's fifth decade are far from schematic or stereotypical. A wise choice that has been made in order to support this thesis is the analysis of three distinctive and yet quite different characters – Annie Ross (*Joyland*), Sadie Dunhill (*11/22/63*), and Holly Gibney (the Bill Hodges trilogy, *The Outsider*). Some of them are developed as supporting characters, such as the significant other who helps the central male figure like Sadie Dunhill (*11/22/63*) and Jeanie Anderson (*The Outsider*). Others (Annie Ross, Tia Conklin) are strong, independent, and are portrayed in their emotional depth. Still others manage to reveal the romanticism of the protagonist (Sadie Dunhill, Janelle Patterson). Among them all, however, the memorable Holly Gibney stands out, as she does not fit into the typical profile of King's female heroines. She is defined by Anastasova as a “fragile bridge to another world” (p. 61) and is considered to be of a hybrid nature combining features of two of King's most beloved categories of characters – children and outsiders. This idiosyncratic image is classified as an integral part of King's late canon – with the potential for further development.

Another very successful aspect of the study is the comparative examination of characters from the fifth decade with protagonists from King's earlier works. These observations are beneficial in terms of outlining the new tendencies in the late characters' building. Dan Torrance in *Doctor Sleep*, for example, is seen as a version of his father Jack Torrance in *The Shining* (p. 26); the novel *Joyland* reveals references to the earlier novella *The Body* (1982); the protagonist writer Jake Epping, who assumes the personality of George Amberson in *11/22/63*, is reminiscent

of Tad Beaumont (George Stark) in *The Dark Half* (1989) and Paul Sheldon in *Misery* (1987). An important observation here is that part of King's most recent novels can be associated with the genre of the criminal novel, which has brought some new types of character on the stage – the American law enforcement – police officers and detectives. They seem to be gradually replacing the predominant in King's early prose character of the writer.

Anastasova's excellent qualities of a serious researcher have been demonstrated in her penetrating insight into every aspect of her study, the interdisciplinary references, and valuable comparative analyses. The precise and wide-ranging selection of bibliographic sources is impressive and it inspires respect not only with its volume but also with its relevance.

Conclusion

The monograph submitted for the habilitation procedure is a modern and significant study not only for the Bulgarian literary studies but also in the world's critical discourse on Stephen King. I would describe it as bold and innovative because of the difficult task of exploring the latest contemporary phenomena without relying on the comfort of already established models of literary criticism.

In conclusion, I would like to express my complete support for Chief Assistant Professor Maria Dimitrova Anastasova, Ph.D. regarding her occupying of the academic position of "Associate Professor".

Blagoevgrad, October 26, 2023.

Signature:

/Assoc. Prof. Boyka Ilieva, PhD/