

BIOGRAPHY



**JOHANNES D.
KAMINSKI**

Institute of World Literature
Slovak Academy of Sciences

Project number
1111/01/03

Project duration
10/2021 - 9/2025

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"For me, the SASPRO 2 Fellowship is a unique opportunity to benefit from the intellectual environment at the Institute of World Literature (SAS), one of the hotspots of comparative literature in Europe. This position is a crucial step toward a tenured position in academe."

I am a scholar of comparative literature with a focus on transcultural topics, including the rewriting of the Western canon in East Asia and contemporary utopianism. While I remain interested in German and Chinese classics, I am currently examining the role of science fiction in supporting grand visions of humanity's salvation through technology and top-down government. After obtaining my PhD at the University of Oxford, I held a string of fellowships around the world, starting with a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Cambridge, an Academia Sinica Fellowship at Taipei (Taiwan) and a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Vienna.

PROJECT SUMMARY

World Government: Grand Narratives in Contemporary Science-Fiction

The present action puts forward the first comprehensive analysis of the concept of World government as figured in contemporary "hard" science fiction. The concept of a global supranational body endowed with supreme political and military power features prominently in classic dystopian fiction, e.g. Huxley's *Brave New World*, where the idea is rejected as oppressive and incompatible with liberal values. Today, authors such as Liu Cixin, Neal Stephenson and Kim Stanley Robinson agree with such reservations, but consider technocratic centralisation necessary. The current international system, they suggest, is not capable of handling planetary emergencies adequately. As a positive measure to counteract pre-sent and future crises, they propose the installation of a World Government. This idea reflects current discussions in political sciences and philosophy, as the emergence of new grand narratives has begun to replace postmodern reservations about progress and rationalism.

Science fiction not only models our future, but also sets into motion critical reflection on the role of technological and sociopolitical regimes in the present. The concept of World Government raises fundamental questions in view of the relationship between individual and collective actors: What are the ethical implications of delegating decision-making to a strong centre? Is such a system capable of con-forming with established notions of justice? How do such scenarios relate to ideas of conspiracy theo-rists, who see a central agency already at the helm of the globe?

Irrespective of the unlikelihood of a World Government's implementation in the near future, the next decades will require more collaboration on an international scale to mitigate the effects of climate change, soil degradation and war. Invoked to legitimise drastic measures, such utopian visions are coloured by totalitarian implications that must be complemented by high levels of media literacy by the academy and the wider public.



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PUBLICATIONS

Recent publications include:

1. "Werther's Patriotic Afterlives: The Imaginary of Self-Sacrifice in Works by Ugo Foscolo, Yu Dafu and Jiang Guangci." In: *From the Enlightenment to Modernism: Essays for Ritchie Robertson* (Oxford: Legenda, 2022), pp. 52–67
2. "Leaving Gaia Behind: The Ethics of Space Migration in Cixin Liu's and Neal Stephenson's Science Fiction." *World Literature Studies* 13.1 (2021), pp. 3–18
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/WLS.2021.13.2.1>
3. "The Neo-Frontier in Contemporary Preparedness Novels." *Journal of American Studies* 55.1 (2020), pp. 1–19
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875820000687>

Full publication list: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9357-1149>