

## AUTOREFERAT

### Academic Portfolio

#### 1. Name: Stankomir Nicieja

#### 2. Diplomas

- 2005      **PhD in Philology in the field of Literary Studies,**  
Faculty of Philology, University of Opole.  
Dissertation title: **“The Cultural Phenomenon of Thatcherism and its  
Representation in the Contemporary British Novel”**  
Adviser: dr. hab. Andrzej Ciuk, prof. UO
- 1997      **MA in Philology in the field of Literary Studies,**  
Faculty of Philology, University of Wrocław.  
Dissertation title: **“The Two Cultures of C. P. Snow: “Literary” vs.  
“Scientific” Culture”**  
Supervisor: prof. James Lynn

#### 3. Employment

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| Since 2006 – present | Assistant professor, Institute of English, University of Opole,                |
| Since 01/09/2018     | Deputy Director of the Institute of English for research and cooperation       |
| 1997 – 2006          | Research assistant, Institute of English, University of Opole                  |
| 1997 – 2012          | English Language instructor, College of Management and Administration in Opole |
| 2002 – 2005          | Lecturer, Teachers’ Training College in Opole                                  |
| Since 2008 – present | Lecturer, Philological School of Higher Education in Wrocław                   |

## 4. Achievements

### Basis of the application

Monograph: *Lessons from the East: Representations of East Asia in Contemporary Anglophone Films and Novels*.

Reviewers: dr. hab. Dominika Ferens, prof. UW; dr hab. Tadeusz Lewandowski.

The basis of my application is the monograph *Lessons from the East: Representations of East Asia in Contemporary Anglophone Films and Novels*, published by Peter Lang in 2018. The monograph is a result of my enduring fascination with East Asian cultures, and particularly their broader influence on the art and culture of the West. In my research for *Lessons from the East*, I focused on demonstrating the main ways in which people in the West have imagined and portrayed East Asia in their most complex narratives, namely novels and films. The book also derives from my abiding interest in cinema and literature as cultural products that reveal unique insights into the complex political and economic processes shaping societies at a given historical moment.

### Significance of the topic

I began work on my monograph with a keen awareness that in the era of globalization and rapid development of information technology, the various aspects of cultural exchange between the East and West have recently gained particular weight. Looking from a longer historical perspective, the flow of ideas between the civilizations from the opposite ends of Eurasia is not a new phenomenon, but—as I emphasize in my book—a constant feature of the cultural landscape that has shaped Western identity, sensitivity, and imagination for centuries.

### The main goals of the monograph

Apart from the more general aspiration to describe the ways in which the cultural heritage of East Asia has influenced the West, the monograph has several important goals presented in the following points:

1. Identify the dominant narrative patterns and conventions reflecting perspectives on East Asia (its people and culture) in Anglophone cinema and novels. Follow the genealogy of these narratives and their different ways of expression.
2. Show that contemporary cinema has not generated original images of East Asia, but has largely drawn from the representational patterns shaped earlier by literary tradition. Cinematic images have usually strengthened and solidified images that were created earlier.

3. Describe how the Western conceptions of East Asia have changed under the influence of the socio-economic currents affecting the region. Base the descriptions in the book on selected films and novels.
4. Determine how the fear of East Asia's growing power has been articulated in the era of heightened sensitivity to racial discrimination in the media. Conduct such an analysis in the context of the rise of China to the role of America's chief geostrategic rival.
5. Describe and analyse the Western motifs of East Asia as a source of inspiration in exemplary Anglophone films and novels. Show how the long tradition of seeking ideas and encouragement from the Far East, especially in times of crises and breakdowns, is reflected in contemporary Western narratives. Hence the title of the book, *Lessons from the East*.

### **The main theses of the book**

My long-term preoccupation with the images of East Asia in Western, especially Anglophone cultures, has led me to formulate the following theses developed in *Lessons from the East*:

1. Together with the growing importance of East Asia in the global economic and political order, cultures and cultural practices originating from this region exert an increasingly visible influence on Western cultures.
2. Thanks to their properties, mainly narrative refinement and deep cultural roots, films and novels constitute uniquely valuable objects of research on the representations of Asia in Western societies.
3. Recently, representations of East Asia in the West have been influenced by two dominant processes. On the one hand, the cultural changes taking place in the Western world have resulted in increased openness to difference and greater sensitivity to manifestations of racial discrimination in public discourse. On the other hand, economically expanding East Asia has become one of the most important markets for Western cultural production. As a consequence of these two processes, the previously widespread offensive stereotypes associated with Asia have disappeared from contemporary screens and novels.
4. The elimination of the most drastic manifestations of racism and orientalism in Western representations of East Asia is not tantamount to a complete eradication of stereotypes or simplifications. We are currently in the latter phase of a transition period and it is still possible to encounter negative representational patterns concerning East Asia in Western narratives; however, they are usually much subtler. Often, only a thorough analysis of texts can reveal their presence in contemporary films or novels.

5. Contemporary Anglophone novel offers much bolder examples of works openly challenging established stereotypes about East Asia. Novels such as Margaret Drabble's *The Red Queen* and David Mitchell's *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* clearly indicate that playing with or subverting stereotypes can be a substantial plot-building device.
6. Not all orientalist simplifications of East Asia have been actively eradicated. Positive, though equally false, stereotypes of East Asia are sometimes promoted in the mainstream media. This applies mainly to modern images of China, which emerge from many productions (usually Western-Chinese coproductions) in an airbrushed and romanticised manner.<sup>1</sup>
7. The theoretical framework laid out in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) remains a valuable tool for the analysis of representations of the Other. However, Said's insights need to be supplemented with formulations that take into account representations resulting from fascination and respect for a different culture. Adopting this approach, it becomes easier to analyse the cases of self-orientalisation mentioned in point 5.

### **The state of research on the representation of East Asia**

The body of writing devoted to Western representations of East Asia and its inhabitants is relatively rich. Beginning from the earliest monographs, it is necessary to mention such important works as Gina Marchetti's *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction* (1994), *Remade in Hollywood: The Global Chinese Presence in Post-1997 Transnational Cinemas* (2009) by Kenneth Hana, *Yellow Future: Oriental Style in Hollywood Cinema* (2010) by Jane Chi Hyun Park, *Hollywood's Representations of the Sino-Tibetan Conflict: Politics, Culture, and Globalization* (2012) by Jenny George Daccache and Brandona Valeriano, *Embracing Differences: Transnational Cultural Flows between Japan and the United States* (2013) by Iris-Aya Laemmerhirt, and *From Fu Manchu to Kung Fu Panda: Images of China in American Film* (2014) by Naomi Greene.

These books can be confidently recognised as a basis of our contemporary knowledge of East Asian images, particularly in relation to cinema. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the titles mentioned above concentrate on presenting negative images of Asia in the West and tracing various ways in which racial prejudice towards Asians has been articulated. The books investigate discourses legitimising Western colonial conquests and providing justifications for

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<sup>1</sup> This type of films is usually intended to pander to the growing sense of national pride among the Chinese as well as alleviate various complexes towards the West. Other motivations behind such projects spring from the desire to promote local tourist attractions through film and visual media.

the persecution of people of Asian descent living in the West.<sup>2</sup> Such emphasis in research is justifiable.

### Gaps in research

The domination of interest in the negative imagery of East Asia has created a gap in research that I have tried to fill with *Lessons from the East*. Therefore, particularly in the second part of the book (in chapters 3, 4 and 5) emphasis is put on positive and affirmative representations of East Asian cultures in Western films and novels. Without avoiding issues connected with the prevalence of unfavourable depictions of Asian people in the West, in *Lessons from the East* I try to identify representative examples in which East Asians become models or inspirations for Westerners.

Among the numerous studies on the representations of East Asia in the West, one can of course point to analyses devoted to depicting positive Asian examples. However, these studies concentrate mainly on the early stages of the cultural exchange, since the late Middle Ages (after the appearance of Marco Polo's and John Mandeville's accounts) until the time of intense infatuation with China in the seventeenth century. Although positive images of East Asia are also present in Western cultures in later periods, they are less often subjected to sustained scholarly scrutiny.

Therefore, after presenting the historical background of the East-West cultural relations in the first part of *Lessons from the East*, I devote my attention to selected contemporary novels and films depicting East Asia. My monograph does not aspire to catalogue all of the recent Western narratives with East Asian themes. Such a work would have merit, but I instead identify and describe symptomatic examples that indicate general tendencies and allow for more thorough analysis. I show that cinematic and novelistic images of East Asia can function in a variety of ways. Asia can be depicted as a domain of spirituality and occult practices, but also as a treasury of practical knowledge and wisdom. Examples of such practical inspirations include the eager adoption of Asian martial arts or Asian management practices in business by Westerners. In my investigation, I was also interested in narratives depicting transformative voyages to the Far East and dramatisations of the psychological consequences of individual encounters with Asia. For my analysis, I chose exemplary fictional characters representing various social and generational groups. In all cases, Asia or Asians are a key element without which the profound changes of the characters could not be realized.

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<sup>2</sup> They may include various forms of discrimination, ranging from racially motivated attacks and crimes to racist legislation, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (practically blocking immigration from China) or the Executive Order No. 9066 issued by President F. D. Roosevelt, authorising forced internment of American residents of Japanese origin during the II World War (the lack of similar repressions directed at people of German origin is quite telling here).

In my selection of examples, I was motivated by a desire to pursue investigations taken up earlier by such authors as Gina Marchetti, Jane Park and Naomi Greene. Thus, in the second part of the monograph, I discuss contemporary films and novels that are useful in revealing how the dynamic development of East Asia, and China in particular, has affected the content and form of Western representations of that part of the world.

### **Theoretical framework**

My monograph is inspired by two important theoretical sources. The first of them is contemporary postcolonial theory, especially the ideas developed by the founder of the discipline, Edward Said (1935–2003), his *Orientalism* (1978), and his *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). Said was one of the first critics to highlight the connection between the representative practices of the discourse on the Other and colonial conquest. In his works, he was concerned mainly with images of the Middle East, and he treated all forms of representation with suspicion. Said ignored representations of the Orient deriving from curiosity, fascination, and a desire to learn (for which he was severely criticised). Partially accepting the legitimacy of this criticism, I expanded my theoretical base with the insights from representatives of the British school of cultural studies, associated with the Birmingham Centre of Cultural Studies. Apart from the leading exponents of the school, Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, my book is also inspired by David Morley and Kevin Robins and their essay “Techno-Orientalism: Japan Panic,” published in *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries* (1995).

The extension of my theoretical base was also dictated by changes in political and economic circumstances. When *Orientalism* was first published, Western domination over other regions of the world (ideological, political, and economic) seemed unshakeable. However, after the crash of 2008 and the crisis of the entire neoliberal project, the intellectual climate has changed and the Western model of capitalism has lost much of its previous appeal. At the same time, the spectacular success of the East Asian economies impaired the ability of the West to enforce its own interpretations of events. Currently, in the era of President Trump, Brexit and mounting social tensions related to immigration, the position of America and its allies is visibly weaker. *Lessons from the East* seeks to describe the impact of these political and economic developments on Western narratives about East Asia.

### **Film narratives as the main basis for research**

The main point of analysis in *Lessons from the East* is film, treated here as one of the most potent tools of influencing and shaping the popular imagination. Cinema not only retains the capacity to appeal to large groups of people, but can also serve as a distinctive barometer of social change. Like any product of human endeavour, film narratives cannot be considered in isolation from their cultural context. Hence, in my investigation I also rely on literary fiction.

I do this for three reasons. First, since the beginning of its existence, cinema draws widely from literary conventions and ideas; second, as an alternative medium, novels often complement cinematic images; and finally, the juxtaposition of literary fiction with film is in many cases determined by the multimedia nature of contemporary culture.

### **Structure and content of the monograph**

*Lessons from the East* consist of five chapters, an introduction, and a bibliography of 308 sources. In the introduction, I characterise the sources, research methods and present Edward Said's contribution to contemporary reflection on the nature of representation and implications of his *Orientalism* in the context of the Western images of East Asia. I conclude the introduction with defining the notions of the East and West used in my monograph.

The main section of *Lessons from the East* can be divided into two parts. The first, which consists of chapters 1 and 2, presents the historical context of the cultural exchange between the West and East Asia. Part two, chapters 3, 4 and 5, examines contemporary East Asian influences in the West using selected examples of English-language films and novels. The first chapter, entitled "East Asia in the Western Imagination", describes the early relations between the cultures at the opposite ends of Eurasia, and the significance of the first European accounts about East Asia.

As the inception of the Europeans' enchantment with the Far East, I point to Marco Polo's *Travels (Devisement du Monde)*, c. 1300) and, especially in the English-speaking world, *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (c. 1357). Using the example of Fernão Mendes Pinto's *The Peregrinations (Peregrinação)*, 1614), I demonstrate the early literary visions of China as a model for Europeans to emulate. Another key stage in building the European image of the Far East that I describe is linked with the activities of Jesuit missionaries in China in the seventeenth century. I emphasise not only their contribution to the production of knowledge on East Asia, but also the paradoxical consequences of their work. On the one hand, the meticulous reports of the Jesuits laid the foundation for European sinology. On the other hand, their actions did not disperse the aura of mystery surrounding China at that time. On the contrary, Jesuit texts inspired the emergence of a new mythology. Many luminaries of the Enlightenment (with Voltaire as their leader) influenced by Jesuit texts portrayed the Middle Kingdom as an example of a well-managed secular state, without an influential caste of priests or demoralized aristocrats at the helm.

In the following sections of the first chapter, I analyse several literary works. The first is *Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Daniel Defoe's lesser known sequel to the story of the famous castaway. Ostensibly driven by an inborn contrariness and fear of China as an obstacle to British commercial interests in Asia, Defoe created one of the most negative images of the Middle Kingdom in the history of English literature. A more flattering judgment on Chinese civilization can be seen in Oliver Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World*

(1762). The figure of a learned mandarin, a visitor to exotic England, is used by the author as a convenient excuse to reveal the follies and absurdities of English life.

The esteem in which the Chinese Empire was held in Europe lasted until the middle of the nineteenth century. On the example of Commodore George Anson's memoirs, *A Voyage Round the World* (1748), one notices the shifts in European attitudes towards China and East Asia. Anson was not only China's unforgiving critic, but he adopted a new attitude by no longer treating English and Chinese cultures as equal. Anson also introduces many views on the Chinese, such as a propensity for cruelty, duplicity, and a fondness for imitations, which shaped English perceptions of the Chinese for decades.

The second chapter, "The East and West in the Era of Western Hegemony," identifies the major Far Eastern motifs in the European and American cultures of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I point to the continuing interest in East Asia in the West, coexisting with the steadily diminishing respect for the region. In chapter 2, I also highlight the significance of new phenomena in the East-West relations. They include mass emigration from China (particularly to USA and Canada), the formation of Chinese enclaves in Western cities (i.e. "Chinatowns"), and the eruption of the anti-Chinese xenophobia, manifested in, among others, the emergence of "yellow peril" narratives. I also present literary works that shaped popular images of East Asia in the West. I explore the importance of Pierre Loti and John Long's narratives, which introduced the archetype of Madame Chrysanthème/Madam Butterfly, a passive, besotted Asian woman ready to sacrifice herself for a Western man. In my considerations, I also point to a collection of Thomas Burke's short stories, *Limehouse Nights: Tales of Chinatown* (1916), as crucial in promoting the myth of London's Chinese neighbourhood as a magical place of passion, transgression and unique erotic experiences (usually unavailable to Westerners circumscribed by Christian ethics and Victorian morality). I also show that despite the prevalence of negative images of the Far East, Asian art continued to provide inspiration to artists, for instance in the influence of *japonisme* on the European impressionists, or that of Chinese and Japanese poetry on modernist poets (with Ezra Pound as the most famous exponent). Based on the example of Isabella Lucy Bird's works and her *Yangtze Valley and Beyond* (1899) in particular, I explain the influence of East Asian travel narratives on the development of travel literature in the late Victorian era.

In addition to the survey of the major East Asian influences on high culture, in the second chapter I evoke two iconic figures symbolising popular attitudes to Asians. On the one hand, there is Fu Manchu, the genius of evil and destruction, created in Sax Rohmer's best-selling series of thrillers. Apparently positive views on Asians were meanwhile personified by the congenial detective Charlie Chan, created by Earl Derr Biggers in the 1920s. Later, I use the juxtaposition of Fu Manchu and Charlie Chan to discuss the impact of a new medium, namely cinema. Starting from D. W. Griffith's classic *Broken Blossoms* (1919), I examine the most popular cinematic images of East Asia, including *Mr. Wu* (1927), directed by William



Nigh, and *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* (1933), directed by Frank Capra. The second chapter ends with a review of the most important events defining the West's relations with the countries of East Asia after the Second World War. Emphasizing the impact of the changing geopolitical circumstances on Western attitudes on Japan and China<sup>3</sup>, I show the emergence of the new patterns of representation like "techno-orientalism." To illustrate the problems associated with the persistence of certain Asian stereotypes at the end of the twentieth century, I evoke John Carpenter's *Big Trouble in Little China* (1986). The second chapter closes with reflections on the cultural consequences of China's economic rise in the twenty-first century and the economic crisis that erupted in the West in 2008.

In the third chapter of *Lessons from the East*, I discuss the influence of East Asian motifs on western masculinity. After characterising the main controversies surrounding the notion of the "masculinity crisis," I focus on the role of kung fu and Asian martial arts in building the image of a modern man. I devote special attention to Bruce Lee as a precursor of a new way of displaying the male body. I describe how, driven on the wave of the popularity of his films, especially *Enter the Dragon* (1973, dir. R. Clouse), Lee became the first Asian American to gain the status of an international movie star and simultaneously a role model for many Western men. I also show a broader ideological dimension of Asian martial arts, especially their emancipatory and symbolic potential.<sup>4</sup> To illustrate my theses, I analyse and compare two films, *Karate Kid* (1984, dir. J. Avildsen) and the film's 2010 remake (directed by H. Zwart). On this basis, I try to show the cultural resonance of East Asian martial arts and illustrate the transformation in the relations between East and West that have occurred over the two decades separating the two films. *The Last Samurai* (2003, dir. E. Zwick), is then discussed to illustrate the use of the martial arts motif as a catalyst for socialisation and character building for mature men. The values of the samurai become the foundation of a spiritual and physical renewal of a demoralized American veteran. In the last part of the chapter, I recall examples of the Western male protagonists inspired by Asia, outside the context of martial arts. I analyse *Cherry Blossoms* (Kirschblüten Hanami, 2009, directed by

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<sup>3</sup> At the turn of the 19th c., after successful industrialisation, Japan became the West's favourite Asian nation. Some doubts arose with the shocking Japanese military victory over Russia in 1905. For the first time in modern history an Asian nation defeated a European empire. The attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 sealed the image of Japan as the archenemy of the West. During the Second World War, the Japanese personified barbaric cruelty while the Chinese became a crucial ally. After the war, the roles changed again. Japan obediently endured US occupation and became a key partner in the Cold War struggles. China, after Mao's communist revolution, turned into an enemy. Sympathies changed again in the 1970s. Mao formed a strategic alliance with the USA and Japan emerged as a dangerous rival for American corporations in the global market.

<sup>4</sup> By this I mainly mean martial arts as a method of overcoming physical and psychological limitations. Thanks to the appropriate exercise regime, a person with less favourable physical conditions may emerge victorious from a confrontation with a larger and theoretically stronger rival. The martial arts cinema had also important emancipatory and anti-colonial dimensions. In those films the audience could see a dainty Asian crushing his white, often racist, adversaries. Subsequently, kung fu movies gained immense popularity in Asia and among the black population in the USA as well as in many Latin American countries. Moreover, without martial arts it would be difficult to imagine any modern popular action movie with a central female character. The female protagonist easily defeating men in direct physical combat have become commonplace in cinema today.

D. Dörrie), *Vengeance* (2009, directed by J. To), *My Blood* (*Moja krew*, 2008, directed by M. Wrona), *The Sea of Trees* (2015, dir. G. Van Sant) and *Gran Torino* (2009, dir. C. Eastwood). I draw attention to recurring themes in these films, such as adoption by a surrogate Asian family and the sacrifice of one's life for the benefit of others.

The fourth chapter of my monograph is devoted to East Asian themes in utopian and dystopian narratives. I start with an analysis of two novels that can be considered constitutive of the Western utopian visions. They both derive from the popular conviction that in order to avoid the aberrations of modernity, the material gains of the West should be synthesised with the rich spiritual legacy of the East. In the first example, Aldous Huxley's *Island* (1962), I show how the author builds his story on such a scenario. Although the novel does not have a happy ending as Huxley's idyll is destroyed by greed and lust for power, it fits well into the fashionable quest for Eastern spiritual enlightenment. Another, more popular embodiment of this vision is presented in James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* (1933). Here, I also give examples of numerous adaptations and imitations of the novel and discuss the legend of Tibet in Western popular culture. This part of the chapter is concluded with an analysis of the more contemporary evocation synergy West-East synergy dream in Elizabeth Gilbert's bestselling novel by *Eat, Pray, Love* (2006).

In the second part of the fourth chapter, the emphasis falls on selected anti-utopias with distinct Asian themes. I start with Ridley Scott's cult classic *Blade Runner* (1982), which inaugurated the cyberpunk genre and popularizes the motif of the East Asian megacity in Western cinema. The next examples include the films *2012* (2009, dir. E. Emmerich), *Looper* (2012, dir. R. Johnson), and the novel *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) by Gary Shteyngart. All the narratives are based on the vision of a new global order in which, in the face of the collapse of the United States, China assumes the role of the new leader. The chapter closes with a look at *Blade Runner 2049* (2017, dir. D. Villeneuve), *Cloud Atlas* (Cloud Atlas, 2012, dir. Lana Wachowski, T. Tykwer and Lilly Wachowski), *Doctor Strange* (2016, dir. S. Derrickson) and *The Great Wall* (2017, dir. Y. Zhang), which I invoke to illustrate the growing importance of East Asian themes in contemporary popular culture. I also draw attention to the currently widely discussed phenomenon of "whitewashing", i.e. the practice of casting white actors in roles more appropriate for Asians (e.g. because of the story content or the source of the story). I treat this debate as a symptom of a significant change in the perception of Asians in the mainstream of Western culture.

The final chapter of the monograph, "Neo-Oriental Romances," is devoted to selected narratives describing interracial romantic relationships. The chapter opens with the analysis of two contemporary historical novels: *The Red Queen* (2008), by Margaret Drabble, and *A Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* (2010), by David Mitchell. I use these novels as illustrations of the currently popular trend to construct plots by undermining or reversing established Western stereotypes about Asians. I complement this argumentation with a

discussion of films adopting a similar approach, in particular with regard to the rich tradition of oriental romance. Most of the attention is devoted to the discussion of three titles: *Lost in Translation* (2003, dir. S. Coppola) and the lesser-known *Miss Kicki* (2011, dir. H. Liu) and *Ghosted* (2009, dir. M. Treut). Based on these examples, I trace the evolution of the Madame Butterfly archetype and the Asian metropolis theme found beyond the science fiction genre. *Lessons from the East* closes with a summary of the main arguments sketched in the introduction, and speculations on the dynamics of future relations and cultural flows between East Asia and the West.

## 5. Other achievements and professional career

### Major themes of research

#### *Contemporary British Novel*

I can distinguish three major themes which have guided my academic career so far. The first is related to my interest in the contemporary British novel, especially its connections with the politics and social transformations of the twentieth century. My interest in this topic derives from my involvement in a master's seminar taught by prof. James Lynn at the University of Wrocław. It was Professor Lynn, one of the more colourful figures in Wrocław's Institute of English Philology, who revealed to me the thematic and formal richness of the contemporary British novel and presented a gallery of remarkable authors, such as Martin Amis, Ian McEwan, Salman Rushdie, Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson, and David Lodge. To Prof. Lynn, I also owe my later interest in the achievements of the Birmingham school of cultural studies.

The fascinations ignited during the Wrocław seminar have had a great influence on my subsequent academic and intellectual development. In the last year of English studies, I became interested in the experimental sciences, especially in psychology, and together with working on my MA thesis, I attended lectures and classes at the Institute of Psychology at the University of Wrocław. In my master's thesis, I took up the problem of mutual relations between the humanities and sciences, through the prism of the famous essay by C. P. Snow, "The Two Cultures" (1959), in which this popular novelist and experimental chemist from Cambridge criticises humanists for their lack of interest in science. Snow's essay remains one of the key points of reference in the debates on the relations between the humanities and sciences.

My fascination with contemporary British fiction, inspired by prof. James Lynn, found its full expression in my PhD thesis. I was intrigued by Thatcherism and its reflections in the contemporary British novel. Taking up this topic, I began to attend conferences and publish articles. I successfully defended my PhD thesis in 2005, advised by prof. Andrzej Ciuk. The dissertation was published in a book form in 2010 by University of Opole Publishing House

(Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego) under the title, *In the Shadow of the Iron Lady: Thatcherism as a Cultural Phenomenon and Its Representation in Contemporary British Novel*.

My main goal in this book was to analyse the cultural consequences of the reforms and policies adopted by Margaret Thatcher in Great Britain in the 1980s, usually collectively referred to as Thatcherism. I presented the context of Margaret Thatcher's election victory in 1979 and the aftermath of her long rule. I explored the image of the prudent housewife she created, as well as the concepts used by her and her supporters, such as "Victorian values," "vigorous virtues" and "enterprise culture." I also depicted Margaret Thatcher as one of the pioneers of political marketing in Europe. Through numerous press interviews and political studies, I wanted to show why Margaret Thatcher (her character as well as her politics) met with such a strong and widespread rejection by the British creative class (i.e. mainly academics and artists).

In the second part of my postdoctoral monograph, I examined the most famous British novels that discussed Margaret Thatcher's personality and politics. I took into account a larger selection of novels, but I devoted much attention to dissecting Thatcherite motifs in *Money* (1984), by Martin Amis, who ruthlessly mocked the greed and intellectual emptiness of the new elites; *Child in Time* (1987), by Ian McEwan, where an anti-utopian convention is applied to unmask the totalitarian aspirations and hypocrisy of the political class; and Jonathan Coe's *What a Carve Up* (1994), which chronicles moral and material degradation during Thatcher's long rule. I close my investigations with an analysis of Allan Hollinghurst's acclaimed novel *The Line of Beauty* (2004), which signals a change in attitude towards the 1980s, creating a more emotionally distanced and nostalgic picture of the Thatcher era.

### ***Utopian and dystopian studies***

The second thread within my research is the study of utopia and anti-utopia in literature and cinema. This thread can be seen as an extension of my research interests connected with my work on both master's thesis and doctorate. Utopia and dystopia encompass issues related to literature (narrative and literary fiction), politics, and science. In the early phase, I was driven in my studies by fascination with the works of J. D. Ballard and Margaret Atwood. My participation in the international conference of the Utopian Studies Society Europe in Tarragona (Spain), in 2006, proved very important for my later development. There, I had an opportunity to meet with a wide range of experts in the field of utopia from around the world. Involvement in this conference provided much inspiration and inaugurated many friendships. I have remained an active member of the Utopian Studies Society Europe and each year I try to participate in their conferences by presenting my papers.

### ***Representations of East Asia in the West***

The third thread in my career is a realisation of my interest in the Western imagination concerning the Far East. The impulse for these activities was born out of personal interest in Asian martial arts and studies of languages, first Japanese and later Mandarin Chinese. Following my interests, my attention was drawn to various Western notions about the cultures of the Far East, especially in the context of the spectacular promotion of China that is taking place in front of our eyes. I was interested in how Western cultures, and specifically, the dominant American culture, react to the emergence of a new, serious rival. I started work writing articles and taking part in scientific conferences, inter alia, at the University of Warsaw, the Confucius Institute in Opole, and the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz.

### Other academic achievements

I have **coedited** the following volumes:

1. *Crosscurrents: Culture and Postcolonial Studies. Seria English Philology 4/29*. Kielce: Wszechnica Świętokrzyska w Kielcach Ludowego Towarzystwa Naukowo-Kulturalnego w Warszawie, 2012.
2. *Evil and Ugliness Across Literatures and Cultures*. Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2013.
3. *Poisoned Cornucopia: Excess, Intemperance and Overabundance Across Cultures and Literatures*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2014.
4. *The Outlandish, Uncanny, Bizarre: Culture Literature Philosophy*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Filologicznej, 2016

I was **assistant** editor for Ryszard Wolny and Zdzisław Wąsik for the volume, *Faces and Masks of Ugliness in Literary Narratives*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2013.

I was the **auxiliary supervisor** of Dorota Rygiel's doctoral proceedings. Rygiel's thesis, "Identity Dilemmas of Silent Minorities in the Selected Novels of Hanif Kuresihi, Monica Ali and Meera Syal," supervised by prof. Dorota Brzozowska, was successfully defended at the Faculty of Philology, Opole University, in April 2017.

I have been a **reviewer** for the following academic journals:

- *Anafora*
- *A/R/T Journal - Analyses/Rereadings/Theories*
- *Res Rhetorica*

### Organisation of conferences

As **conference secretary**, I was in charge of organising the following international conferences:

1. *Australia: Identity, Memory and Destiny*. University of Opole, Instytut Filologii Angielskiej, 22–23 September 2006.
2. *Evil, Ugliness, Disgrace in the Cultures of the West and East*. Instytut Filologii Angielskiej Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, Kamień Śląski, 25–26 October 2010.
3. *Poisoned Cornucopia: Excess, Intemperance and Overabundance across Literatures and Cultures*, Opole, University of Opole, 12–14 September 2012.
4. *The Outlandish, Uncanny, and Bizarre in Literatures and Cultures*, University of Opole, 29–30 September 2014.

I was a **member of the organising committee** of the conference *Disease, Death, Decay in Literatures, Cultures, and Language*, held at the University of Opole, 26–28 September 2016.

As a member of the Opole Voivode advisory board I was in the organising committee of the international Polish-Chinese conference, *One Belt One Road*, which took place at the Exhibition and Congress Centre in Opole on April 25, 2017. The conference's institutional organiser was the Opole Voivode, the City of Opole and Opole Technical University.

### Activity in scholarly associations and research networks

I am actively involved in the work of the **Polish Association for the Study of English (PASE)**, the largest organization of academic teachers of English from Poland. I am a **PASE board member** for the third consecutive term. I also act as the association's webmaster.

In March 2017, I have become an **Advisory Board Member** for the **Asia Theories Network (ATN)**. It is a global scholarly platform for exchanges and collaborations among scholars specialising in the humanities and interpretive social sciences. David Theo Goldberg from the University of California Humanities Research Institute (UCHRI) is the lead coordinator of the project.

Since December 2017, I am the University of Opole coordinator for the project *The University Consortium of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road (UCMSR)*, a cooperation network connecting universities in China and Europe organized by Xiamen University, PRC.

### International cooperation

Motivated by my scholar interests, I have tried to develop cooperation with partners in East and Central Asia. I have been the coordinator of cooperation between University of Opole and universities from Asia, mainly China, Taiwan, Indonesia and Kazakhstan. I was

the initiator and coordinator of cooperation agreements between the University of Opole and Fujian Normal University, Fujian University of Technology, Dalian University of Foreign Languages, Tunghai University (in Taichung), and Changchun University.

My collaboration with scholars from Taiwan's Graduate Institute of Taiwan Literature and Transnational Cultural Studies in the National Chung-Hsing University (NCHU) Taichung and the College of Liberal Arts, National Taiwan University (NTU) proved particularly valuable for my career.

## **6. Organisational and didactic achievements**

One of my most important recent organisational achievements is the creation of the Summer English School for Foreigners at the Opole University. I have been the head of this project for the last three years, and the summer school has already become a regular fixture in the calendar of academic activities at the University of Opole. Each year, the school hosts more than 60 students, mainly from the People's Republic of China, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine.

I regularly participate in the academic exchanges within the Erasmus programme. I have had the opportunity to conduct classes and meet with colleagues from partner universities in Spain, the Czech Republic, Croatia, and Latvia. I have prepared many grant applications within the framework of the Erasmus Plus K107 programme (cooperation with countries outside the European Union), and I am one of the authors of successful applications that enabled the mobility of employees of the University of Opole to China, Taiwan, Albania, Serbia, and Iran.

### **Guest lectures abroad**

Thanks to my international contacts, I have been invited as a guest lecturer to several universities:

1. March–April 2010, lectures and workshops at National Dong Hwa University, Hualien, Taiwan and Tatung University, Taipei, Taiwan.
2. April 2011, lectures at National Dong Hwa University, Hualien, Taiwan.
3. May–June 2017, guest lectures in Taiwan as part of a grant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Taiwan at National Taiwan University, Taipei; National Cheng Kung University, Tainan; National Chung Hsing University, Taichung, Taiwan.
4. 30 March–21 April 2018, as a guest lecturer at the invitation of the Department of Communication, University of Brawijaya, Malang, Indonesia.
5. May 23–27, 2018: speech at the seminar on "The Politics of Dread" organized by the Asian Theories Network (ATN) consortium at Dong-Guk University, Seoul.

### **Didactic Achievements**

I support and supervise the Mandarin Chinese language learning program at the University of Opole, organised in cooperation with the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Warsaw. Thanks to that cooperation, Chinese teachers from Taiwan conduct courses in Chinese to students of English and applied linguistics.

I regularly participate in many popularizing initiatives, including:

1. Workshops and lectures for high school students visiting the University of Opole.
2. Meetings with authors in the Municipal Library in Opole.
3. The annual Chinese New Year celebrations at the University of Opole (exhibitions and lectures related to the promotion of Chinese culture).
4. Lectures and events organised together with the U.S. Consulate General in Krakow.
5. I have been invited by local media as a commentator or interviewee. My appearances in local media have been mainly related to commenting on current events in the U.S. and my work as the head of the summer English language school for foreigners.

In my didactic work, I have always striven to offer innovative and interesting courses to my students. My recent proposals include digital cultures, introduction to film studies, medical humanities (offered to medical students at our university). I have been conducting seminars for the undergraduate students, I am also a reviewer of numerous master's and bachelor's theses. My courses are frequently chosen by students and receive high marks in annual questionnaire surveys. For my activity at the University of Opole, I have received the Rector's Award (three times) and the Quality Award for activities aimed at improving the quality of teaching at the University of Opole.

