

**Institute of World Literature, Slovak Academy of Sciences**

**International colloquium**

*Humanities in translations* – *translation in humanities*

*Exploring transfer and reception*

Organized by the Institute of World Literature, Slovak Academy of Sciences

Date and venue: 15 – 16 May 2025, Bratislava, Slovakia

*To what degree can translation of these kinds of works be considered a scholarly activity in its own merit?Science is one of the most important factors in the formation of cultural life. It empowers nations. Due to its immense potential for the development of culture, science has thus become the most moral and sacred of all human endeavors and obligations.*

Ján Lajčiak: Slovensko a kultúra [Slovakia and culture], 1920

Translation has accompanied European civilization and learning since the times of ancient Rome. Throughout its history, translation has reached many important milestones. It started with the renderings of sacred texts, which at many places throughout Europe helped constitute national literature and establish standard written languages. Translation saw an important boost with the *translatio studii* movement which transferred and further developed classical learning in many regions of medieval Europe. In modern times translating gradually developed into distinct yet interconnected spheres of literary and specialized translation. Since the mid 20th century, translation became the focus of research in specialized translation theories. These brought forward complex typologies of translated texts and their relations based on translation genres or the nature of translation activities (as evidenced by concepts such as literary, technical, pragmatic, epistemic, or philosophical translation, cf. J.-R. Ladmiral, K. Reiss, M. Lederer, T. Milliaressi, and others). Today translations of humanities texts are understood as part of thought circulation, knowledge transfer, and the constitution of symbolic capital in the still pertinent asymmetries of cultures, languages, and intellectual milieus/fields (cf. P. Bourdieu).

Translated text from the humanities disciplines (incl. philosophy, sociology, arts, linguistics, literary theory and history, theology, etc.) carry contents and knowledge that in the last two centuries have entered into specific cultural and social circumstances and have always been reflected in specific cultural and geopolitical spheres, which themselves have undergone changes instigated by globalization and institutionalization. On these shifting grounds, translation as one of the means of knowledge transfer has unearthed new problems. Notwithstanding its complexities, translation has helped to spread scholarship; it has increased its value as well as established scientific knowledge it its various stages. In this sense, translation can be viewed as a constituent factor of cultural memory. Apart from that, it can be seen as an instrument of knowledge as well as an essential tool in research and academic education. The translations of key authors and texts gradually build up thesauri of knowledge, help canonize prominent thinkers, and constitute corpora of works whose presence in a given target culture is also arguably a matter of prestige.

Translating can also be a scientific and interactive, conversational activity and grow out of translators' research interests or out of pragmatic needs to instigate knowledge growth in the pedagogical sphere (as witnessed by so-called academic translations) and in the target cultures' research practices (in which case it enters a network of influences in knowledge exchange). Translators of science ans scholarship serve as mediators between languages, different thought traditions and intellectual heritages. This liminality impacts their strategies, methods, and decision processes. These translators also help promote scholarship (or, in the case of "classical" learning, high culture) and, unlike of their colleagues working on literary texts (whose main work prerequisite is creativity), what is most expected of them is the proficiency in the discipline from which they are translating. Given the thematic wherewithal it requires, scientific and scholarly translation is extremely sensitive to anything with a detrimental effect on its quality, be it from external sources (institutional and ideological pressures or censorship) or internal ones (professional or linguistic incompetence of translators or insufficient editing).

**The colloquium aims to explore the circumstances of these kinds of non-literary transfers and translations, to study the commonalities and differences between Western and Central-Eastern Europe in this respect, and to look for answers to the following series of questions by sparking discussions and exchanges of ideas and experience:**

* To what degree do translations have the power to constitute thesauri of texts which are in effect the cultural and literary heritage of various humanistic disciplines?
* Can translations fully realize their potential in scholarly knowledge transfer given the differences and asymmetries of cultures, intellectual arenas, and scientific establishments and given the strong ties of scholarly works to their source languages and the argumentation styles these encourage vis-à-vis the linguistic and discursive traditions of the target cultures?
* In a globalized world dominated by English as its lingua franca, does it even make sense to translate humanities texts? Does it make sense to translate into smaller languages if there are already translations to English, from which quotations are often translated to other language as need arises? Does this signal the re-emergence of second-hand translation and with it a higher risk of shifts of meanings and other translation inaccuracies?
* Is the reception of scientific knowledge through translation sufficient, desirable or, on the contrary, redundant given that even though science is said to be multilingual, in reality humanities scholars are basically required to master the languages of the foreign intellectual traditions they focus on?
* What future lies ahead for this kind of translation given today's pressures to produce knowledge only in English? What are the consequences of such a trend? Do we risk non-translation, which would limit or effectively bar certain groups of readers (e. g. students or non-professionals) from attaining knowledge? Could such a situation negatively impact the languages and knowledge of target cultures?

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* What potential fault lines does humanities translation find itself at given the historical and geopolitical peculiarities of various political and ideological regimes?
* How does humanities translation help disseminate and democratize knowledge on one hand and on the other indoctrinate (promote certain ideologies)?
* What is the nature of humanities translations that have come about with ideological motivations (in order to support or supplant certain grand narratives)?
* To what degree does the tendency not to translate, manifested through bans or censorship, affect the state of translation given that the texts which have not been translated become missing links in the chain of circulation and mediation of knowledge? What can be learned from belated translations and what impact do they have?

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* Along what paths and in what ways do social science and humanities knowledge, theories, and concepts travel through translation (institutional practices, publishers, editions, edition plans and intents, book publications, the role of anthologies, functions magazines play, etc.)?
* How much does the manner of translating change with text type, for instance with philosophical texts or texts with interdisciplinary topics (literary essays, translation studies, art theory and history, spiritual texts)? To what degree can translation of these kinds of works be considered a scholarly activity in its own merit?
* How is translation, the knowledge it brings forward, and the discursive practices agents dealing with it employ presented (paratexts such as notes, commentary, peer-review and editing) and contextualized it within the target book culture (editions as instructions for reception and understanding, books visuals as a means of emphasizing, downgrading, or misrepresenting their respective topics)?

We welcome contributions focusing on:

1. histories of humanities translations
2. translation and transfer of scholarly knowledge and their institutional contexts
3. translatability and untranslatability: concepts, terminology, types of scholarly texts and their argumentation, stylistic conventions
4. translators and key figures of humanities (case studies)

Colloquium languages: French, English

Abstracts + brief bio sketches (max. 1,800 chars.) to be submitted by 30 June 2024.

The abstracts will be evaluated by the Scientific Committee of the Colloquium.

Organizational committee: Katarína Bednárová, Silvia Rybárová, Ján Živčák, Igor Tyšš

Notification of acceptance: 30 November 2024.

Please send your abstracts to the following e-mail address: humanintrans@gmail.com

Conference fee: 90 € (45 € for PhD. students).

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