

Thought in motion: Humanities and social sciences in translation

IGOR TYŠŠ – FLORENCIA FERRANTE

© Institute of World Literature
Slovak Academy of Sciences

© Igor Tyšš, Florencia Ferrante 2026
Licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

The history of humanistic and social scientific inquiry is inseparable from the history of its translation. While past translation studies scholarship heavily favored literary texts, recent global histories show that the flow of knowledge relies on translation at almost every juncture. In this issue of *WORLD LITERATURE STUDIES*, we step away from traditional distinctions between literary and non-literary texts to explore how translation in the social sciences and humanities functions as an intellectual intervention. We consciously frame this intervention as “thought in motion”. By choosing “thought” over “ideas”, “paradigms”, or “concepts”, we embrace the active, evolving, and sometimes messy process of intellectual work. “Thought” captures the human element behind the theory. Similarly, using “motion” rather than “circulation” emphasizes the dynamic, transformative, and occasionally resistant journey of these texts across borders. It is not a mechanical distribution of data, but a complex trajectory where meaning is constantly negotiated. By bringing discourses, disciplines, historical narratives, and intellectual fields into existence, translation brings thoughts into being within new cultural and institutional contexts. Recognizing that concepts are tightly bound to specific realities, we intentionally opted for methodological open-endedness. Our goal was to acknowledge diverse traditions of science and knowledge-making, revealing how translation intervenes to establish new realities rather than acting merely as a neutral carrier. This issue brings together articles originally presented at the conference “Humanities in Translations – Translations in Humanities” (May 14–16, 2025, Bratislava). The contributions address the history of social sciences and humanities translation through several distinct lenses. They examine the embodied practice of translating the humanities, the shifting boundaries between literary and historical writing, and the ways historians translate and deploy sources to build counter-narratives. Furthermore, the authors explore how translating the social sciences and humanities helps constitute and structure cultural and disciplinary fields. By foregrounding the critical role of terminological choices and the often-overlooked impact of indirect translations and reception, these papers also demonstrate how social sciences and humanities translation continues to shape our intellectual landscapes.