



# SEMESTRIAL REPORT AUTUMN – WINTER 2024–2025

**New Europe College –  
Institute for Advanced Study**

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## A Word to Our Readers:

### Tandem – Author with Translator, Translator with Author

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*Tandem – Author with Translator, Translator with Author* – one of the most recent additions in the portfolio of New Europe College – stems from NEC's interest and expertise in the larger Black Sea area and the perceived lack of connections between the societies and cultures on its shores. Having invited researchers from the countries in the region for many years, NEC recognized the chance to complement its scholarly profile with a more culturally oriented component and devised the *Tandem* project. At the core of the program is the joint residence of a translator and her/his author. S. Fischer Stiftung (Berlin), which has a brilliant reputation for supporting literary translations, in particular in languages that are not so present on the commercial global market, immediately embraced the idea and enabled us to start *Tandem* in 2022.

*Tandem* is dedicated to *literati*. Tandems of authors and their translators are invited to the NEC for (usually) two months. Provided with a stipend and accommodation, they are given the time and support necessary to work on the text that shall be made accessible to a new, broader readership. Thereby, the program seeks to deepen and disseminate the knowledge in and about the literary landscapes around the Black Sea and strengthen understanding and respect among the peoples and cultures all around.



*Tandem* fellows work on texts written in and translated into Armenian, Azeri, Bulgarian, Georgian, Romanian, Russian, Turkish, Ukrainian. Eligible are primarily works of fine literature (novels, short stories, poems, etc.). Non-fiction books can also be proposed, provided that they are aimed at a broader audience and have literary qualities.

During their residency at NEC, translators work together with authors to clarify translations challenges and to better understand the work in a broader context (the setting, the target audience, etc.). Moreover, the recipients of *Tandem* fellowships come into direct contact with a strong and vibrant research community. Their interaction with the other NEC fellows can spark new projects, to be

developed individually or together with others. *Tandem* fellows also participate in literary/cultural events (FILIT, meetings with writers and translators, with students from the Faculty of Letters in Bucharest or Iași, etc.). So, on the one hand, *Tandem* fellows are exposed to Romanian culture and, on the other hand, the Romanian audience is familiarized with the literary landscape of the Black Sea Region.



Translating Susanna Harutyunyan,  
“Agravnerə Noyits araj” / “Ագրավները Նոյից առաջ”  
/ “Ravens Before Noah” from Armenian into Turkish,  
NEC Seminar, November 8, 2023

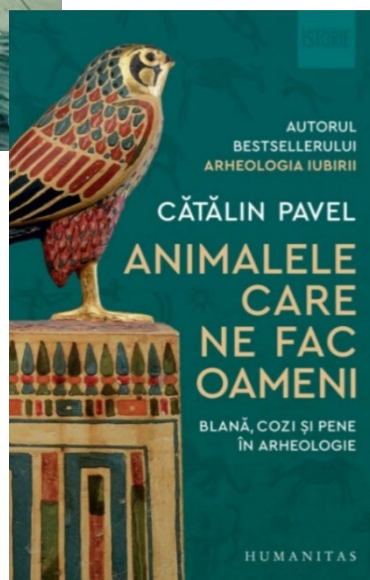
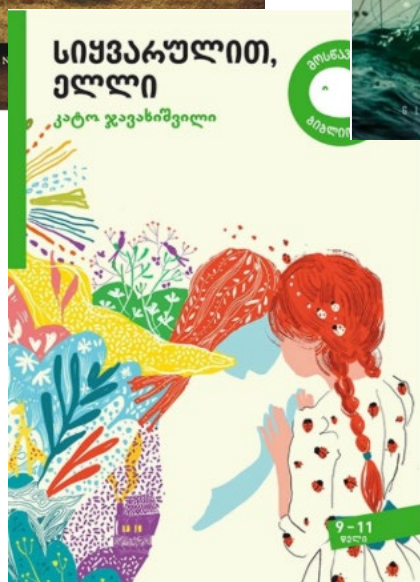
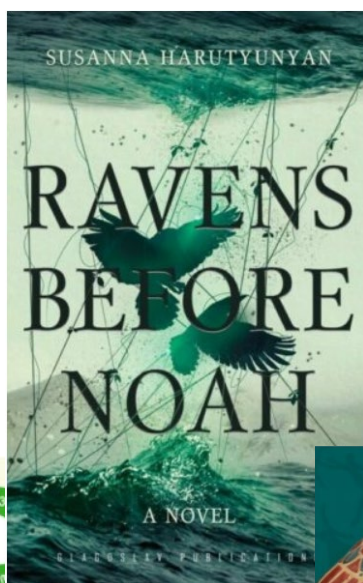
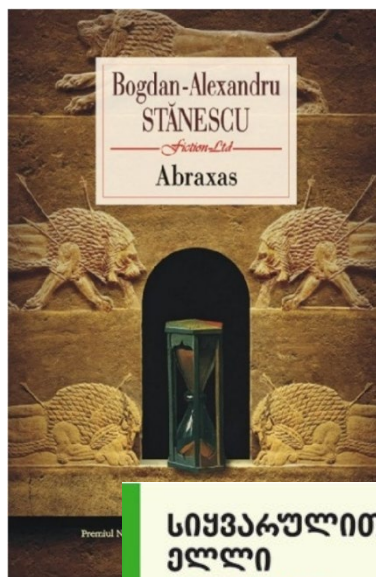


So far, seven pairs of authors-translators were invited to the NEC and pursued their work here. Their feedback has underlined the fruitfulness of direct collaboration: an opportunity, which makes the *Tandem* program one of its kind. In their reports, translators mentioned the “irreplaceable value of face-to-face encounters” (Jale Ismayil, 2024/2025) and exemplified: “It is essential to engage in a dialogue with the author, obtain approval for some necessary changes, or together find alternative solutions, and this requires spending a considerable amount of time together” (Ani Sarukhanian, 2022/2023). Or, as one of the authors added: “Translation isn't just about translating a story – it's much more, and without working with the author, it cannot be complete” (Kato Javakishvili, 2024/2025).

Currently, NEC is preparing for a third year with *Tandem* fellows. We all are deeply grateful to S. Fischer Stiftung for this, and join in with Lora Nenkovska (translator, 2024-2025) who concluded her report: “So, I hope the *Tandem* will have a long and fruitful life. The benefits of this program are not measured only by the number of translated pages, but by the cultural bridges that are built with the gentle power of literature.”



Translating Bogdan-Alexandru Stănescu's “Abraxas”  
from Romanian into Bulgarian,  
NEC Seminar, February 19, 2025



# Current Fellowship Programs and Research Projects

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## Fellowship Programs

### NEC Fellowships (since 1994)

This is the NEC core fellowship program, which during the institute's first years targeted exclusively Romanian scholars from the humanities and social sciences. Fellows are invited on the basis of their own freely chosen research projects for a full academic year. From 2000 onward, NEC has opened its doors first to researchers from the neighbouring countries, later from the world at large, without relinquishing its support of Romanian young scholars. As a result, starting with 2008 the core program was split into two distinct, though closely interrelated lines:

**International Fellowships**, enjoying the financial support of NEC's institutional sponsors. These fellowships are complemented through funds resulting from an award granted for the first time in 2016 by the Romanian *Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation* within the Prize for Excellence in Research awarded to New Europe College for hosting ERC Grants. Since October 2023 NEC has been hosting a new ERC Advanced Grant. This success opened the opportunity for the New Europe College to apply once again for an institutional prize, which resulted in the **UEFISCDI Award Program**.

**Ștefan Odobleja Fellowships** (since 2008), targeting young Romanian researchers, supported also by UEFISCDI.

The Fellows are chosen by the NEC international Academic Advisory Board for the duration of one academic year or one term. They gather for weekly seminars to discuss the progress of their research and participate in all the scientific events organised by NEC. They receive a monthly stipend and are given the opportunity of a research trip abroad, at a university or research institute of their choice. At the end of their stay, the Fellows submit papers representing the results of their research, to be published in the New Europe College Yearbooks.

### Gerda Henkel Fellowships (since 2017)

This program, developed with the support of Gerda Henkel Stiftung (Germany), invites post-doctoral researchers and academics working in the fields of humanities and social sciences (in particular history, art history, history of law, history of science, historical Islamic studies, archaeology, prehistory and early history) from former Soviet countries (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan), Afghanistan and China (only Tibet and Xinjiang Autonomous Regions). The terms of fellowship are similar to those of the NEC Fellows: residencies of one or two terms at the New Europe College to work on projects of their choice.

### Lapedatu Fellowships (since 2018)

According to its Statute, the Lapedatu Foundation supports research activities on 'the life and work of Lapedatu family members and the socio-cultural and political context' during which they lived. Thanks to a generous financial contribution from the Lapedatu Foundation, NEC invites to Bucharest a foreign researcher specialized in the field of Romanian Studies, who is currently conducting research in one of the world's top universities. On this occasion, he will spend a month in Romania and work with a young Romanian researcher to organize an academic event hosted by the NEC. At this colloquy, the Lapedatu fellows and their guests will present scientific papers and initiate debates on a theme that covers important topics of the Romanian and Southeastern European history in both modern and contemporary epochs.

### ***Ameropa Fellowships (since 2020)***

Organized with financial support from Ameropa and its subsidiaries in Romania, and with academic support from the Centre for Government and Culture at the University of St. Gallen, this program aims to investigate the conditions and prerequisites for democratic stability and economic prosperity in Romania and the neighbouring region. The *Ameropa* Fellowship Program is open to early career Romanian researchers in history, anthropology, political science, economics or sociology. Their projects should focus on aspects relevant for the challenges to democratic consolidation, economic development and strengthening of civil society in Romania and the region. Each year, an annual workshop will be organized in the framework of the *Ameropa* Program.

### ***DigiHum Fellowships (since 2021)***

The 'Relevance of the Humanities in the Digital Age' Fellowship Program, proposed jointly by the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia and the New Europe College Bucharest and developed with the financial support of the Porticus Foundation, aims to underscore the cognitive functions of the Humanities and their potential as critical disciplines by opening them up to issues relevant in/for the contemporary digital world – issues that are “practical”, but also epistemological, ethical, philosophical, etc. The program is intended to accommodate a wide range of themes pertaining to Humanities and Social Science disciplines provided that they link up to contemporary debates about or major challenges to the human condition stemming from the technological advances and ‘digital modernity’. The program is guided by the belief that there is a considerable added value for Humanities scholars across the academe, whatever their field, to be encouraged to rethink their topics in terms of their broader contemporary relevance (be it political, ethical, religious or academic), yet necessarily of significance for the world we are living in. The program addresses international scholars.

### ***Botnar Digital Wellbeing Fellowships (since 2022)***

The *Botnar Digital Wellbeing* Fellowship Program supported by the Botnar Foundation is addressed to Romanian and international researchers in the field of social and human sciences, interested in studying the effects of digital technologies on the quality of life of young people. The program aims to strengthen the role that New Europe College plays in this field, contributing to the production of knowledge and competences on the impact of digital transformations. To this end, the program uses the potential of the humanities and social sciences as key disciplines to analyze the opportunities and risks posed by the digital revolution (particularly in post-communist and transitional societies), while encouraging the exchange of ideas and critical debates between researchers in the social humanities and those in the IT production and development sector.

### ***Sustaining Ukrainian Scholarship Fellowships (since 2023)***

The SUS fellowship program, run jointly by the New Europe College and the *Centre for Advanced Study* (Sofia), aims to support scholarship in the regions affected by Russia's war against Ukraine. It targets qualified researchers (post-doctoral level) in the humanities and the social sciences, including law and economics, who wish to work on a project of their own choosing. Selected applicants are offered the opportunity to spend an extended period (ideally one or two semesters) as Fellows, resident in either Bucharest or Sofia, where they enjoy all the benefits associated with a fellowship (stipend, accommodation, academic and administrative assistance, integration into international academic networks). By agreement, financial support can also be granted to researchers who are not in residence for the full period and who need to continue their work in Ukraine. Additionally, Fellows can also apply for seed funds for specific projects that contribute to the long-term strengthening of Ukraine's academic system (e.g., the provision, development or reconstruction of research infrastructure, especially in the digital arena). The program is financed by the VolkswagenStiftung (Germany).

With shared fellowships, NEC and CAS also contribute to the initiative promoted by the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, to establish an (for now virtual) *Institute for Advanced Study* (VUIAS) in Kyiv.



### ***IWM for Ukrainian Scholars Fellowships (2023-25)***

After Russia's brutal full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the *Institute for Human Sciences* (IWM in Vienna) made special funds available to the NEC to invite further Ukrainian researchers in the humanities and social sciences.

### ***GCE St. Gallen Fellowships (since 2022)***

Similarly, the University of St. Gallen's *Center for Governance and Culture in Europe* (GCE) has provided extra funding for scholars whose academic careers have been affected by the current war in Ukraine.

### ***TANDEM – Author with Translator – Translator with Author (since 2022)***

TANDEM is a program dedicated to *literati*: to writers and translators from the cultures and countries around the Black Sea. By promoting translation from and into languages spoken on the shores of the *Pontos Euxeiños*, it aims to contribute to understanding and connection among the region's neighbors. Tandems of authors and their translators are jointly invited for two months in residence at the NEC, to work on the translation of a specific text (novel, poetry, children's literature). The program is supported by S. Fischer Stiftung, Germany.

### ***Mattei Dogan Fellowships (since 2023)***

These fellowships, organised with academic and financial support from Fondation Mattei Dogan (Paris), targets early career scholars (within five years of receiving their doctorate) from Central and East European (CEE) and Black Sea states (Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Northern Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Belarus, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Turkey, Georgia, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan) who are attached to an academic institution in these countries at the time of application. Candidates should propose original approaches to comparative social science research. The program is open to all academic disciplines in the social sciences. The selected post-doctoral researchers will have the opportunity to work on projects of their choice for one or two semesters, as fellows in Bucharest.

### ***Landis & Gyr Fellowships (since 2000)***

These fellowships are awarded under the umbrella of the studio program for artists, writers and cultural critics in London, Zug, Budapest, Bucharest and Sofia, offered by Landis & Gyr Stiftung, Zug (Switzerland). Landis & Gyr Foundation (one of the main supporters of NEC since its inception) has the use of one of the apartments on the NEC premises, where recipients of a grant offered by the Foundation are hosted. They work on their own projects, give presentations of their current work and are welcome to take part in all NEC activities.

## **Research Projects**

### **Colonial Anxieties, Corruption Scandals and Xenophobia in Nineteenth-Century Infrastructure Development in Romania (CanCor)**

#### **UEFISCDI Exploratory Research (2022-2024)**

The CanCor project examines the surprising historical relevance of rail and fluvial-maritime transportation infrastructure for the self-imaginings of nation-building and the narratives of modernization in the Romanian Principalities/Romania, from the 1840s to 1914. Given the dual nature of such transportation infrastructures, imagined as both “progressive” and “disruptive”, their construction brought immense pressure upon local decision-makers. The project has three main goals: First, it will examine anxieties over the possibility that the Principalities/Romania would be subject to economic and even demographic colonization, fears generated by the asymmetrical political and economic interactions with Europe's Great Powers and neighbouring empires. Second, it will examine the corruption scandals surrounding infrastructure construction that generated and constantly reshaped

colonial anxieties in the process of nation-state-building, when faced with Great Powers and their imperial and colonial-like aspirations of political and economic influence. Third, the project will historicize the semantic usages of “colonialism” and “corruption” and their inherently political uses in nation-building in Romania and in the process of infrastructure construction, arguing that, on both accounts, reflexively situating their meanings is necessary as a way of disentangling them from the ex-post analytical vocabulary normatively employed by (contemporary) scholars.

The research project is coordinated by the NEC Alumna **Silvia Marton**, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Bucharest. It is developed with the financial support of the *Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation* (UEFISCDI) of the Ministry of Education in Romania, within the Exploratory Research PN-III-P4-PCE-2021-0399.

### **Entangled Histories of the Danubian Quarantine System (1774–1914) (DaQuaS)** **UEFISCDI Exploratory Research (2022-2024)**

This project aims to investigate – from an entangled and global histories perspective and in connection with recent developments in the transdisciplinary field of quarantine studies – the various functions of the quarantine system established in the eighteenth century and institutionalized after 1829 along the Lower Danube. A special focus will fall on the period stretching between 1829 and 1853, the climax of the Danubian preventive system, but it will also document quarantine arrangements made, in the second half of the nineteenth and in early twentieth centuries, by an international organization, the European Commission of the Danube, and by riparian states (Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania).

The project will bring empirical and theoretical insight to the burgeoning field of quarantine studies, turned mainstream in the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic. Empirically, it will showcase the Danubian quarantine system as a hybrid version of the Russian, Austrian and Mediterranean models and will reveal how transnational sanitary cooperation looks like from the vista of small states. Lazarettos will be turned into paradigmatic hubs for the transfer of knowledge, technology and human resources in peripheral societies. Theoretically, the project aims to devise a model for how sanitary crises fuel modernization, based on a polynomial function that considers geopolitical, political, economic, societal, and sanitary factors.

The research project is coordinated by the NEC Alumnus **Constantin Ardeleanu**, researcher at the Institute for South-East European Studies in Bucharest. It is developed with the financial support of the *Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation* (UEFISCDI) of the Ministry of Education in Romania, within the Exploratory Research PN-III-P4-PCE-2021-1374.

### **Rule of Law at the European Periphery: (Dis)incentive Structures and Conceptual Shifts (ROLPERIPHERAL)** **UEFISCDI Exploratory Research (2022-2024)**

The project deals with the way in which evolving rule of law conditionalities and associated institutional discourses influence the operation of national constitutions of the EU member states and, conversely, contribute to the shaping of European constitutionalism at the interface between legal orders. The rule of law is the dominant contemporary constitutional discourse, both at the national and supra/international level. However, the mechanics of its unfolding, the determinations contributing to it, and the complexity of the conceptual and contextual strands intertwined in legal practices are largely ignored and understudied. The project focuses on systemic interactions at (related to) the “periphery”, since the growth of rule of law instruments at the level of the European Union and its sister organization, the Council of Europe, is directly correlated with developments related to the liminal, Central and Eastern European, jurisdictions, i.e., the new member states and the current candidates in the so-called Western Balkans (as well as, more recently, Ukraine and Moldova).

The NEC Alumnus **Bogdan Iancu**, Associate Professor at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Political Science, is coordinating this research project. It is developed with the financial support of the *Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation* (UEFISCDI) of the Ministry of Education in Romania, within the Exploratory Research PN-III-P4-PCE-2021-0319.



## **Grammars of Emotion: Shame and the Social Economy of Honour in Medieval Heroic Literatures (GRAMMOTION)**

**UEFISCDI Postdoctoral Research (2023-2025)**

This project will provide a holistic and fine-grained understanding of the emotional life of medieval Northwestern European elites by investigating the emotional performance of shame and its function in the socio-cultural economy of honour across a broad corpus of heroic verse and saga from the ninth to the twelfth century. It proposes a novel approach combining sociological and computational methodologies with the history of emotions and literary analysis that will establish a comparative cross-cultural synthesis of medieval emotional vocabularies and functional grammars of honour by using shame, the most social and most intimate affect, as a privileged entry-point.

GRAMMOTION will open new horizons in the study of historical emotion by approaching its performance as structured social action whose linguistic and stylistic patterns can be identified, formalized, and compared on an unprecedented scale by using statistical corpus analysis in synergy with culturally-situated case studies. This work enables the tracing of patterns of change over time, in transition between cultural spaces, and in adaptation to various socio-political needs. This project will set the standards for more sophisticated approaches to analyzing emotion in the digital study of language and literature, also providing novel pathways for future work at the conjunction of all these cutting-edge areas of research. Its main output will consist in four articles providing a methodological toolkit for future researchers investigating emotions in premodern corpora, for Digital Humanists, and for social historians, as well as an interdisciplinary workshop bringing together scholars in all of these areas.

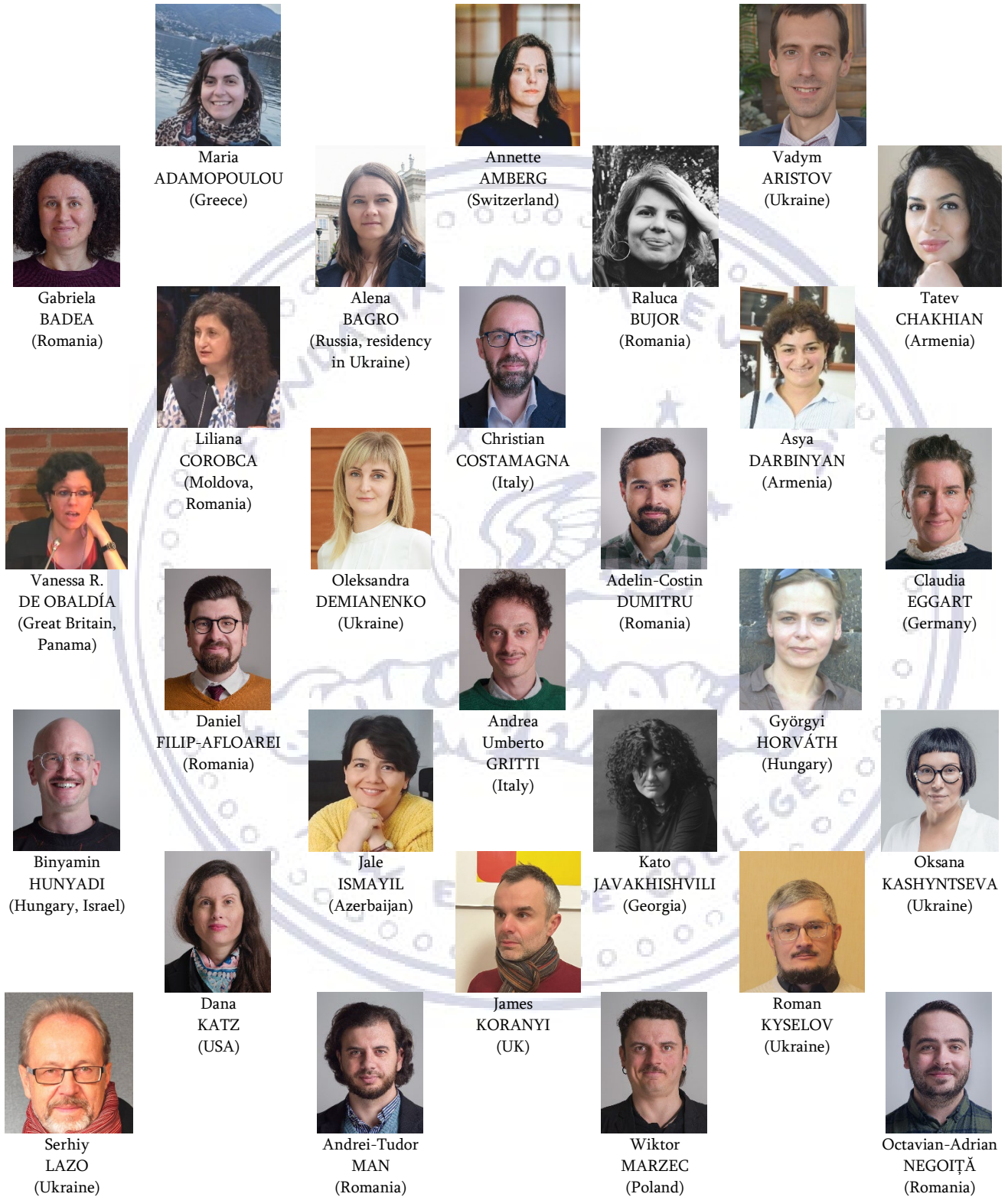
The NEC Alumnus **Cătălin Țăranu**, a literary-historical scholar working on the vernacular poems and cultures of early medieval Northwestern Europe, is coordinating this research project. It is developed with the financial support of the *Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation* (UEFISCDI) of the Ministry of Education in Romania, within the Postdoctoral Research PNRR-III-C9-2022-19.

## **Transnational Histories of ‘Corruption’ in Central-South-East Europe (1750-1850) (TransCorr) ERC Advanced Grant (October 2023 – September 2028)**

Politicians, scholars, and popular writers between 1750 and 1850 routinely characterized South-East-Central Europe as a corrupt political space. A wide range of foreign observers portrayed graft, nepotism, and bribery as endemic. Indigenous critics echoed many of these assessments. Regional insiders and outsiders alike mobilized commentaries on ‘corruption’ for their own political, professional, and personal ends, claiming they could run more honest and efficient administrations, military regimes, and commercial operations than those in power. These notables linked ‘corruption’ to the region’s supposed cultural backwardness and economic under-development. In doing so, public figures naturalized notions of ‘corruption’, making it appear both widespread and organic in the region – popularizing tropes that have endured right down to the present. Yet, ‘corruption’ is a historically specific concept. TransCorr seeks to construct a history of the idea of ‘corruption’ in Central-South-East Europe in conjunction with the rise of modernity. It demonstrates how in the context of new ideas about modernity emanating from West Europe, regional leaders reframed a host of traditional customs and practices as corrupt. It examines how Great Power attempts to transform these borderlands into formal and informal imperial provinces further entrenched novel understandings of ‘corruption’, often pejoratively associating them with the Ottoman legacy. By tracing out this history, TransCorr reveals a genealogy of ideas, discourses, and attitudes that continue to inform analyses of and discussions within the region today. The project brings the study of this geographic area into greater dialogue with a global story of modernization and aligns the region’s historiography with new innovations in the scientific literature. It also reframes contemporary debates on patronage and graft and reconfigures broader understandings of centre-periphery relations within the region and across the continent.

This ERC Advanced Grant is coordinated by the NEC Alumna **Silvia Marton**, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Bucharest. It is funded by the European Union (ERC-2022-ADG no. 101098095).

# 2024 – 2025 Fellows





### Fellows in the 2024–2025 Academic Year: Citizenship

Armenia	2	Moldova / Romania	1
Azerbaijan	1	Poland	1
Bulgaria	1	Romania	13
Georgia	1	Russia, residency in Ukraine	2
Germany	2	Switzerland	4
Greece	1	UK	1
Hungary	1	UK / Panama	1
Hungary / Israel	1	Ukraine	8
Italy	2	USA	1

**Total: 44**





### INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY IN THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF UKRAINIAN MEMBERSHIP IN THE EU

**Oksana KASHYNTSEVA**  
(Ukraine)

*GCE St. Gallen* Fellow,  
October 2024 – February 2025

Head of the Department of Intellectual Property  
Rights and Human Rights in Healthcare, Scientific  
and Research Institute of Intellectual Property of  
the National Academy of Legal Sciences of Ukraine

Presentation on October 9, 2024

Intellectual Property Law plays a crucial role in the pharmaceutical market, especially from the perspective of making medicines affordable. The necessity to harmonize the Ukrainian Intellectual Property legislation in the sphere of compulsory license (CL) and government use (GU) of medical products is predicted by two modern challenges: the first one is the rebuilding of the Ukrainian Public Health system because of the war and the second one is the necessity to implement acquis EU on CL and GU according to the new “EU Pharmaceutical Package” keeping in a focus the national security context under Article 73 “Security Exceptions” of TRIPS Agreement. Ukraine urgently needs a theoretical background and overview of the current developments in the EU, with a particular emphasis on the ongoing reform of CL in patent law. This reform has significant implications for Ukrainian IP law and public health policy.

### PRE-CHRISTIAN GERMANIC RELIGIONS IN GREEK SOURCES

**Sabine Heidi WALTHER**  
(Germany)

*NEC UEFISCDI Award* Fellow,  
October 2024 – July 2025

Adjunct Lecturer, University of Bonn

Presentation on October 16, 2024

Greek source texts on Germanic religions are temporally closer to the religious customs they describe than Old Norse source texts, which commonly are considered the primary source of pre-Christian Germanic religions. Greek sources also provide information on Germanic groups in other regions than Scandinavia. Despite these advantages, Greek sources on Germanic religions are widely neglected in scholarship. The project will try to fill this gap in research by presenting and evaluating these source texts.

The Greek source texts present specific challenges. The authors are not ethnographers in the modern sense of the word, and their epistemological interest usually does not lie with the Germanic peoples and their religion. Therefore, it is essential to ask about the motivation of the authors to provide such information at all, about their sources, their concepts of civilization, their images of the “others”, and their ideas about religion, as well as about the narrative function of the passages within the work.





## SECRET FRIENDS OF RUSSIAN (PROPAGANDA) SCIENCE

**Oleksii PLASTUN**  
(Ukraine)

*SUS-VUIAS* Fellow,  
October 2024 – July 2025

Professor, Sumy State University

Presentation on October 23, 2024

Russia is the most sanctioned country in the world, with up to 19,000 different sanctions – 3-4 times more than any other sanctioned country in history. Despite claims from Russian officials that their economy is holding up well, is this true? Does it mean the sanctions are ineffective? Why is the Russian economy seemingly resilient? Which sanctions are the most or least effective? Should the focus shift from imposing new sanctions to ensuring compliance with existing ones?

Support for Ukraine hinges on a clear understanding by politicians and the public that the cost of supporting Ukraine is justified. Therefore, the Russian propaganda machine works hard to show that sanctions are ineffective. This project aims to debunk these and other myths and demonstrate that sanctions are working, while also suggesting ways to improve their efficiency.

## TANGLED ANTENNAS: A COLD WAR HISTORY OF RADIO FOR GREEK MIGRANTS

**Maria ADAMOPOULOU**

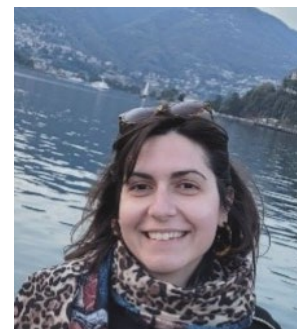
(Greece)

*NEC UEFISCDI Award* Fellow,  
October 2024 – July 2025

*Independent Scholar*

Presentation on October 30, 2024

*Tangled Antennas* is a historical investigation of native-language radio programs addressing the Greek labor migrants in West Germany in the period between 1960 and 1980. Situated methodologically and empirically at the crossroads of a growing scholarly interest in the role of radio in migration, my research project also includes an unmissable Cold War dimension, determining the ideological content of the radio broadcasts and their outreach, including propaganda and counter-propaganda. By adding in the picture more local forms of information flow, *Tangled Antennas* is an effort to move beyond the usual focus on American or Soviet efforts of infiltration across the Iron Curtain. My case study involves two main transnational actors opposingly addressing the same migrant community, namely the Greek nationalist governments and the exiled Communist Party of Greece, which had its own radio station called 'The Voice of Truth' (Η Φωνή της Αλήθειας). My objective for this project is to put together these two stakeholders and recreate their dialogues through the reports of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Greek Embassy in Bonn, searching also for potential archives of the Communist radio station at its former seat in Bucharest or at the Open Society Archives in Budapest.





## BRIDGING HISTORIES: UNVEILING THE INDUSTRIAL EVOLUTION ACROSS THE HABSBURG EMPIRE'S PERIPHERY

**Raluca-Maria TRIFA**

(Romania)

*Ștefan Odobleja* Fellow,

October 2024 – July 2025

Teaching Assistant, "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest

Presentation on November 6, 2024

The project aims to explore the intricate industrial history of peripheral cities, going beyond the conventional focus on the Habsburg core. Departing from existing territorial constraints, the study decodes unique attributes of cities on the outskirts of the empire. While centered on Timișoara, the research takes a comprehensive approach, considering other cities like Pécs, Rijeka, Ljubljana, and Brno. These cities, marked by their significant industrial legacy and cultural importance, have been recognized as past or potential European Capitals of Culture (ECoC). They rightfully assume focal significance in this study, enabling the identification of meaningful patterns in the industrial history dynamics within the Habsburg Empire's periphery.

By analysing the evolution and development of these cities, the research aims to go beyond the conventional narratives, uncovering the distinct trajectories that characterized their industrial histories and their connection to the broader imperial context.

## TRANSLATING LILIANA COROBCA'S *KINDERLAND* FROM ROMANIAN INTO AZERBAIJANI

Presentation on November 6, 2024

**Liliana COROBCA** (Moldova, Romania)

*Tandem* Fellow,

October – November 2024

Expert Researcher, Institute for Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile

**Jale ISMAYIL** (Azerbaijan)

*Tandem* Fellow,

October – November 2024

Translator

*Kinderland* (novel, Cartea Românească, 2013, Polirom, 2015) is concerned with the problem of contemporary migration, viewed from a new angle: that of children left at home, with parents working abroad. At the age of twelve, Cristina, the main character of the book, is forced to become the "mother" of two younger brothers. Through the eyes of the girl we discover the universe of a contemporary Moldovan/Romanian village, populated mostly by children and old people. Although the book refers to a phenomenon specific to the ex-Soviet space, which exists also in Azerbaijan, *Kinderland* is better known in the Western European space, being translated into German, Italian, Slovenian, Serbian, English, Dutch (forthcoming), but not into any of the languages of the former USSR. *Kinderland*, translated into Azerbaijani, would be the first contemporary Romanian and Moldovan novel proposed to Azerbaijani readers after the fall of communism.







**TRANSLATING KATO JAVAKHISHVILI'S  
*WITH LOVE, ELLI*  
FROM GEORGIAN INTO UKRAINIAN**

Presentation on November 6, 2024

**Kato JAVAKHISHVILI** (Georgia)  
*Tandem Fellow,*  
October – November 2024

Writer, Editor

**Serhiy LAZO** (Ukraine)  
*Tandem Fellow,*  
October – November 2024

Poet, Translator, Composer

The children's book by Kato Javakhishvili "With Love, Elli" will be translated from Georgian into Ukrainian by Serhiy Lazo. The book tells about a girl whose father works in the "Boredom Committee" and has no time for his daughter. The girl misses her mother, who died in an accident. Suddenly, an imaginary friend Elli appears in the life of the main character and an amazing adventure begins. Each story is based upon the 5 senses (sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing), which gives a reason to the girl to rediscover the world. She comes to believe that "the main thing is to learn to observe and feel whatever you cannot see". She will understand that even birds can feel pain, she will discover that lies feel sour, missing someone tastes bitter, sorrow feels salty, and love tastes sweet as honey.

Translation of this book into Ukrainian will be important for Ukrainian children who need to deal with stress most of the time, who lost loved ones, friends, family members.

**UKRAINIAN HISTORY, ETHNICITY AND  
CULTURAL MEMORY IN CONTEMPORARY  
AMERICAN AND CANADIAN LITERATURES**

**Iryna YAKOVENKO**  
(Ukraine)

*Sustaining Ukrainian Scholarship Fellow,*  
October 2024 – July 2025

Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics  
and Translation, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv  
Metropolitan University

Presentation on November 13, 2024

The project seeks to explore literary representations of Ukrainian ethnic code, reflections on the tragic Ukrainian past and their intersections with cultural memory in contemporary Anglophone prose. Through close readings of the novels, short stories, memoirs, and essays of diasporic writers the research focuses on representations of Ukrainian history marked by wars, genocide, the Great Famine, poverty, oppression, the Chornobyl nuclear disaster, and on the exemplifications of Ukrainian culture and traditions, the intricate ornament of mythology and archetypes, the correlation between the personal experience of the writers with hyphenated identities and cultural memory. The research explores the issues of exile and migration, intersections of national and family histories, memory and forgetting, ethnicity and identity in the oeuvre of American (Askold Melnyczuk, Alexander J. Motyl, Irene Zabytko, Irene Kowal, Orest Stelmach, Michael M. Naydan, Erin Litteken) and Canadian writers (Myrna Kostash, Janice K. Keefer, L. Grekul, Marusya Bociurkiw).





**“MUHAMMAD AND HIS BOOK CALLED QUR’AN”: GREEK ANTI-ISLAMIC WORKS IN THE EARLY MODERN OTTOMAN EMPIRE**

**Octavian-Adrian NEGOIȚĂ**  
(Romania)  
*Ștefan Odobleja* Fellow,  
October 2024 – July 2025

Junior Researcher, Institute for the History of Religions, Romanian Academy

Presentation on November 20, 2024

How were Greek Orthodox audiences informed about Islam during the Ottoman times? What texts circulated among the community of believers and shaped attitudes towards Prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an? This research focuses on the Greek Orthodox anti-Islamic literature produced during the Ottoman rule. It investigates the contexts in which polemical discourse(s) were articulated and how the Byzantine tradition influenced this literary corpus until the dawn of modernity. A detailed analysis of two case studies (i.e., the circulation of the polemical works of the renowned emperor and monk John Kantakouzenos, and the hitherto unknown treatise about Mecca and Medina by George Byzantios Bozantzoglou) will contribute to a better understanding of the Greek Orthodox attitudes towards Muslims throughout the early modern era, and help us evaluate different positions about Islam and the Qur'an from the Eastern Mediterranean to Muscovy via Eastern Europe.

**ECONOMIC KNOWLEDGE, ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE OTTOMAN BALKANS, 1839-1878**

**Andrea Umberto GRITTI** (Italy)  
*NEC UEFISCDI Award* Fellow,  
October 2024 – July 2025

Associated Researcher, Center for Turkish, Ottoman, Balkan and Central Asian Studies (CETOBaC),  
EHESS, Paris

Presentation on November 27, 2024

My project aims to analyze the economic effects of the institutional transformation undertaken by the Ottoman government in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ottoman modernization will be scrutinized in both its intellectual and practical dimensions, considering the transfer of new concepts and reconstructing the contexts of their adoption in administrative action. During the initial phase of its period of reform (*Tanzimat*), the Ottoman state sought to strengthen its bureaucratic apparatus to counter the threat of European expansion. Maximizing tax revenues became essential for the renewal of the military. The notion of the common good (*nâfia*) was institutionalized, and technocratic intentions were integrated into the existing framework of public finance thought. Historiography has been divided since the 1990s. Proponents of Ottoman colonialism argued that this new paradigm of governance was imposed on peripheral populations. Conversely, microhistorians contended that the new discourses on economic progress could not produce immediate effects and that their implementation as policies was hindered by resistance from the governed. What remains to be clarified is the genesis of this resistance and to what extent it depended on local forms of power or on the pre-existing integration of regional structures into international economic networks.





## VIA DOLOROSA OF UKRAINIAN PRISONERS OF WAR AND CIVILIAN HOSTAGES

**Vladimir ZHBANKOV**

(Russia, residency in Ukraine)  
GCE St. Gallen Fellow,  
October 2024 – February 2025

Head of Legal Aid Programs, Free Russia Foundation

Presentation on December 4, 2024

The active phase of Russia's invasion (and war from 2014) of Ukraine in February 2022 posed unprecedented challenges to international law, particularly humanitarian law. This war, unprecedented in scale since adopting the Geneva Conventions in 1949, has tested the resilience and applicability of legal frameworks. Russia, denying the war and calling it a "special military operation," continues to annex Ukrainian territories, advancing narratives of territorial defence despite facing resistance and retreating with prisoners and civilian hostages. The "Poshuk.Polon" project has information on detainees, striving to locate prisoners and assess their conditions. The project navigates a complex legal landscape where Russia denies access to POWs and civilian hostages, leading to inhumane treatment, torture, and biased criminal trials. Legal defence in these cases is further hindered by the Russian military's control over detention facilities and territories.

This research proposal seeks to analyze the legal, ethical, and practical challenges posed by modern warfare and Russia's aggression. It explores the effectiveness of international humanitarian law and the role of non-governmental organizations in protecting human rights during armed conflict. Through case studies and legal analysis, it aims to propose solutions to strengthen protections for civilians and combatants alike.

## COURTLY ECOLOGIES IN AN EARTHLY PARADISE: THE ROYAL PARKLANDS AND PALACES OF THE NORMAN KINGDOM OF SICILY

**Dana KATZ (USA)**

*NEC UEFISCDI Award Fellow,*  
October 2024 – July 2025

Researcher, Institute of Archaeological Sciences,  
Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main

Presentation on December 11, 2024

The project, to be published as a scholarly monograph, is a study of a historical landscape of the medieval Mediterranean. The Norman rulers of Sicily created a circuit of parklands around their capital Palermo in the twelfth century. Modelled on elite Islamic estates, the Christian kings transformed their surrounding landscape on a monumental scale, building a series of waterscapes of monumental lakes, basins, and fountain installations. Within these greenspaces, the royal park palaces were built in an Islamic mode, with axial plans, honeycombed vaults, and Arabic inscriptions. The project considers architecture and designed landscapes as embedded together in a human-made environment with layered meaning, exploring the formation of royal power over a multi-faith population in a medieval hegemonic society. Part One of the book employs methodological tools borrowed from the environmental humanities for the study of the royal parks. A key concern is the power dynamics between the ruling Norman minority and the Muslim majority. Part Two comprises case studies of specific parks, palaces, and smaller pavilions, including comparative examples from Iberia and the Maghreb. Incorporating analyses and interpretations from recent scholarly and archaeological work, this study on Sicilian palaces and parklands integrates new approaches and perspectives on Islamic palaces, gardens, and waterscapes.







**GREAT POWERS IN THE «FIGHT» FOR  
OTTOMAN CHRISTIANS: IDEOLOGY AND  
IMPLEMENTATION OF PATRONAGE POLITICS IN  
1774-1856**

**Olena UVAROVA**

(Ukraine)

*Sustaining Ukrainian Scholarship Fellow,*  
October 2024 – July 2025

Associate Professor, Department of Social Sciences,  
Odesa National Medical University

Presentation on January 8, 2025

The project is dedicated to the exploration of the diverse manifestations and implementation of patronage politics from the sides of Russia, Britain, France, and Austria towards Ottoman Christians (Greeks, Bulgarians, Moldavians, Vlachs, and Serbs, etc.) between 1774 and 1856 in the context of solving the Eastern Question. The study explains how various imperial powers embodied the goal of potentially using Christian groups as strategic minorities and traces the long-term implications of patronage politics on the everyday lives of Balkan immigrants resettled on the territory of modern Ukraine. The documents gathered from the Odesa Region State Archives will be used to fill an important gap between the macro-historical analysis of Great Powers politics and the micro-historical analysis of Ottoman Christians' daily existence on the Northern Black Sea coast. The theme underlines the need for understanding historical reasoning and diverse expressions of patronage politics due to their vital role in shaping Great Powers' politics in the region as well as creating the foundation for ethno-nationalist struggles.

**VIEWS ON PLAGIARISM IN EUROPE ON THE  
EVE OF THE AGE OF COPYRIGHT  
(LATE 17<sup>TH</sup> – EARLY 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES)**

**Roman KYSELOV**

(Ukraine)

*IWM for Ukrainian Scholars Fellow,*  
October 2024 – July 2025

Senior Researcher, Shevchenko Institute of Literature  
of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

Presentation on January 15, 2025

The prevalence of the phenomena of compilation and plagiarism (i.e., what looks like plagiarism according to present-day criteria) in early modern European literature is obvious. While there are some interesting research works exploring regional reflections on this issue during specific periods, there is still no comprehensive theoretical study of how these phenomena were interpreted in early modern Europe. Previously, I translated into Ukrainian the theses of the “Philosophical Dissertation on Literary Plagiarism” (1673) by Jacob Tomasius, published a commentary on them, and later published a study based on original sources, exploring thoughts about plagiarism in Europe from the earliest times until the publication of Tomasius’ study. Now, I want to cover the period from 1673 until the conventional starting date of the copyright era in 1710, when the famous English copyright law was issued. A study of the early modern works on the phenomenon of plagiarism will help to find non-anachronistic criteria for answering questions relevant to many early modern writings: what was real plagiarism, what was the use of the rhetorical theory of imitation, and what might be interpreted as innocent use of others’ material despite the formal characteristics of plagiarism in terms of our era.





**THE DYNAMICS OF SYMPATHY IN LATE  
ANTIQUITY: PHILOSOPHICAL AND  
CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES ON THE WORLD,  
SOCIETY AND THE INDIVIDUAL**

**Andrei-Tudor MAN**

(Romania)

*Ștefan Odobleja* Fellow,  
October 2024 – July 2025

Associated Researcher, Center for Ancient and  
Medieval Philosophy of the “Babeș-Bolyai”  
University of Cluj-Napoca

Presentation on January 22, 2025

Sympathy (*sympatheia*) was a major concept of the Stoic and Platonic reflection on the unity of the world, denoting the interconnection and interaction of all the parts of the world. During Late Antiquity, the concept was broadly used as an instrument to explain causal phenomena belonging to different domains, including here religion. Pagan and Christian authors employed the concept in their explanations of the interaction between the divine and human realms. The Church Fathers converted, therefore, *sympatheia* into an expression of the solidarity of the members of the Church founded on their common suffering. Focusing on the works of Basil of Caesarea, Gregorius of Nyssa, and Augustin, the present project aims to study the transmission of this concept to patristic authors from the perspective of the classical heritage in Christian literature. A focused comparison between the patristic texts and the philosophical theories they use will allow us to discern the originality of the Christian perspectives and a genealogical analysis will disclose the influence of certain philosophical schools on Christian authors of Late Antiquity and the pattern of transmission involved here.

**THE MAKING OF THE RURIKIDS: HISTORICAL  
WRITING AND DYNASTIC TRADITIONS IN  
EARLY MEDIEVAL EASTERN EUROPE**

**Vadym ARISTOV**

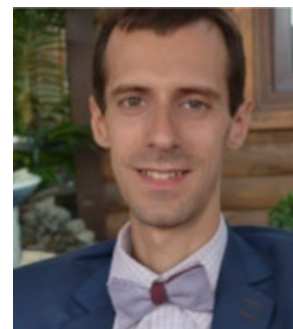
(Ukraine)

*Gerda Henkel* Fellow,  
October 2024 – July 2025

Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Ukrainian  
History, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

Presentation on January 29, 2025

The project examines practices of power sharing and the formation of dynastic memory and identity of the Rurikids, a ruling clan of Rus. The Rurikids' history is analyzed in comparison to early medieval ruling elites of the “barbarian kingdoms”. Two key approaches are applied in this research. A study of Rus' political history is inevitably a study of its historical narratives at the same time. This is all the more important that traditionally textual criticism of the Ruthenian chronicles and political history of Rus exist as autonomous disciplines instead of a mutually beneficial collaboration. The second approach is the shift from the traditional “institutional” view on Rus' political history (still dominating the studies in the field) to a cultural and anthropological view. Political history of Rus in the 11<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries is regarded here in terms of accumulating of the ruling family's experience, shaping of identity, and rituals of elite communication. The research involves two stages. At the first stage, a deconstruction of the ‘dynastic narrative’ of the Rurikids will be conducted. The second stage is the reconstruction of the process of formation of this ruling family and analysis of the key elements of its dynastic identity.





## FROM WOMEN'S NGOS TO DIGITALLY CONNECTED WOMEN IN ILLIBERAL HUNGARY

**Györgyi HORVÁTH**

(Hungary)

*DigiHum* Fellow,

October 2024 – July 2025

PhD Candidate, National University of Kyiv-Mohyla  
Academy, Department of Literature

Presentation on February 12, 2025

This project focuses on the sudden rise of women's online spaces (first blogs, later social media pages) in the Hungarian-language part of the internet during the 2010s, where women's issues, previously marginalised by the mass media – like domestic abuse, obstetrical violence, women's health, the unequal division of household tasks etc. – could be, for the first time in Hungary's history, freely and publicly discussed with the participation of a large number of ordinary women, and thereby achieve significant social visibility in a country that has traditionally been hostile to feminism. Through CDA and interviews, this project aims at exploring and describing the most popular of these online spaces; mapping their main uses by women (with special attention to the extent to which these uses serve emancipatory goals); and exploring their impacts (or the lack of these) on the current Hungarian illiberal government, in power since 2010. Through this, the project expects to contribute to the study of networked movements, to the often under-researched field of women's grassroots activism in Central-Eastern and Eastern Europe, and to the newly emerging field of Illiberalism Studies.

## THE 'SELF-LIMITING' REVOLUTION IN POLAND IN THE 80s: A TURNING POINT FOR THE ROMANIAN COMMUNIST REGIME

**Daniel FILIP-AFLOAREI**

(Romania)

*Ştefan Odobleja* Fellow,

October 2024 – July 2025

Expert Researcher, The Institute for the Investigation  
of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the  
Romanian Exile

Presentation on February 19, 2025

This project investigates the impact of Poland's 'Self-Limiting' Revolution on the regime in Bucharest on two levels: political actions and structural. Given that the events in Poland were a result of the global crisis, not just a local one – the foreign debt crisis and the outbreak of the Second Cold War – I start from the hypothesis that the Romanian regime perceived the Polish 'Self-Limiting' Revolution as a threat to its own interests. Despite the prevailing perception that Romania was increasingly isolated in the 1980s, I believe it was not immune to what was happening around it. The first objective is to analyze how the government in Bucharest dealt with the crisis from Poland in 1980-1981, both in terms of discourse and political actions. The second one involves investigating a longer time span to determine the impact of the crisis, starting with the introduction of Martial law in Poland in December 1981 and the seizure of power by General Jaruzelski until "Solidarity" won elections in June 1989 and appointed Tadeusz Mazowiecki as Prime Minister. In the end, the results of the research will help us better understand the exogenous factors that contributed to the degeneration of the Ceaușescu regime in the 1980s.







## TRANSLATING BOGDAN- ALEXANDRU STĂNESCU'S "ABRAXAS" FROM ROMANIAN INTO BULGARIAN

Presentation on February 19, 2025

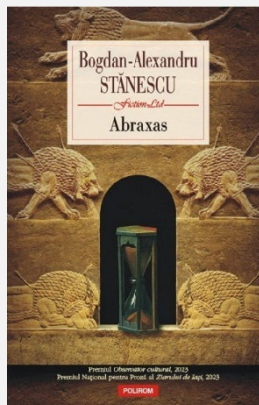
**Bogdan-Alexandru STĂNESCU** (Romania)  
*Tandem* Fellow,  
January – February 2025

Writer, Editorial Director at Pandora M Publishing House, Bucharest

**Lora NENKOVSKA** (Bulgaria)  
*Tandem* Fellow,  
January – February 2025

Translator, Chief Assistant, Department of General and Indo-European Linguistics,  
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

Author and translator work together on the translation into Bulgarian of *Abraxas*, a novel which documents the evil and the melancholy of the world, and unashamedly believes in the power of literature to redeem. The novel *Abraxas* was published by Polirom in 2022.



## ISLAMIC INSTITUTIONS IN ROMANIA: FROM RELIGIOUS TO SECULAR-POLITICAL ACTORS (1878-1947)

**Metin OMER**  
(Romania)

*Ștefan Odobleja* Fellow,  
October 2024 – July 2025

Researcher, The Institute for Black Sea Studies and  
Associate Lecturer, Faculty of History and Political  
Science, 'Ovidius' University of Constanța

Presentation on February 26, 2025

The project analyzes the integration mechanisms of the Islamic institutions (Muftiates, Muslim Communities, Qadiates) in the Romanian bureaucracy and identifies their role in the community's modernization process from 1878 to 1947. This research aims to fill a historiographical gap in terms of the integration of Dobruja, the history of the Muslims in Romania, the evolution of Romanian institutions and the history of the post-Ottoman Balkan space. Its uniqueness is due both to the sources used and the comparative approach. This project uses Romanian, Ottoman/Turkish documents, as well as the press and memoirs of the Muslim community. At the same time, the formulas adopted by the officials in Bucharest are analyzed in a regional context by comparing them with the decisions taken in this respect by the Russian Empire and the other Balkan states that inherited important Islamic populations. In this way one can better understand how the demographic composition and the relationships of each state with the Ottoman Empire/Turkey shaped the functioning of the Islamic institutions.



# Colonial Anxieties, Corruption Scandals and Xenophobia in Nineteenth-Century Infrastructure Development in Romania (CanCor)

Report on activities by **Silvia Marton**, Project Leader  
UEFISCDI Exploratory Research (2022-2024)

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CanCor examines the surprising historical relevance of rail and fluvial-maritime transportation infrastructure for the self-imaginings of nation-building and the narratives of modernization in the Romanian Principalities/Romania, from the 1840s to 1914. There has thus far been no attempt to systematically look at how transportation infrastructure construction in the nineteenth century had an impact on shaping the political vocabulary of Romanian nation-state-building via the historical actors' notions and historical controversies over "colonialism" and "corruption".

Team members pursued their research in archives and libraries, drafted their articles and book chapters, and participated to international and national conferences.

On December 12-13, 2024, Silvia Marton and Andrei Sorescu participated to the international conference "Scandals and Politicization of (Anti)Corruption. From Loyal Subjects to Mass Politics (17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Centuries)", organized at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (GREPIIC-UAB), Spain. Silvia Marton presented the paper titled "*Discontent Grows*. Transportation Infrastructure and Corruption Scandals in the Nineteenth Century in Romania." Grounded in an 1875 published pamphlet and the controversies on railway concessions in Romania, her contribution showed that, through its massive interference in the natural, social, and political order, infrastructure construction worked to bring corruption charges under the spotlight. It allowed for society-wide disputes on the overlapping factors conducive to public corruption, from financial-economic factors to moral and political ones, and it led to questioning public norms and ideals. Andrei Sorescu presented the paper titled "How 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Romanian Nationalism Became Anti-Colonial." He examined how Romanian nationalism became "anti-colonial" in the nineteenth century in the context of massive infrastructure investments and construction and argued for the applicability of the label to the otherwise surprising case of a country that was not, properly speaking, colonized.

On December 12, 2024, team member Toader Popescu gave a talk titled "Frica de a pierde trenul. Raporturi de putere în planificarea infrastructurii feroviare din România înainte de Primul Război Mondial" (in Romanian) at the NEC. (Further details on page 31.) He examined the conflicting attitudes of local administrations towards the integration of towns into the rail network in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

On September 4, 2024, team member Toader Popescu presented the paper "Urban fringes in the European periphery: railway infrastructure and industrial development in Bucharest at the turn of the century" at the international conference "Cities at the Boundaries" of the European Association for Urban History (EAUH) held in Ostrava, the Czech Republic.

## PUBLICATIONS:

Team members submitted a special cluster of four articles to East European Politics and Societies (EEPS) (currently under peer-review). The articles examine the surprising historical relevance of corruption scandals surrounding infrastructure for the self-imaginings of nation-building and the narratives of modernization in the Romanian Principalities/Romania in the nineteenth century.

Silvia Marton and Andrei-Dan Sorescu co-edit a volume that explores the intersecting debates around the nexus of “colonization”, “corruption”, and “xenophobia”, with illustrative case studies of controversies originating in transportation infrastructure in South-East Europe. All CanCor team members contribute to the volume. The different chapters are grounded empirically in examining the historical, material-technical, institutional, and discursive production of transportation infrastructure (its phenomenological and performative nature). Three conceptual chapters lay the groundwork for connecting the theoretical framework with infrastructure as a source for reflection. They examine, firstly, the powerful performative capacity that infrastructure polemics had in shaping the public, in unravelling conceptions on “corruption”, and in questioning public norms and ideals in the nineteenth century. Secondly, they showcase the discursive production of the “colonial” and of xenophobia in connection to infrastructural development, and, finally, highlight historical approaches to the recent and highly interdisciplinary debates around “critical infrastructures”. The volume will be submitted for publication to CEU Press (Budapest), “Imperialism and Colonialism in Central and Eastern Europe” Series.

This project is funded by a grant from UEFISCDI, as part of the funding agency’s *Basic and frontier research* scheme (PN-III-P4-PCE-2021-0399). It is hosted by the New Europe College – Institute for Advanced Study in Bucharest (from June 2022 to December 2024). Project website: <https://cancor.nec.ro/>

#### **Team members**

##### **Project Leader:**

Silvia MARTON, PhD, Associate Professor, Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest

##### **Experienced Researchers:**

Toader POPESCU, PhD, Assistant Professor, “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest

(Part of the research team starting October 2023)

Constantin ARDELEANU, PhD, Researcher, New Europe College, Bucharest / Senior Researcher, Institute for South-East European Studies, Bucharest

(Part of the research team until September 2023)

##### **Postdoctoral Researchers:**

Raul CÂRSTOCEA, PhD, Lecturer in Twentieth-Century European History, Department of History, Maynooth University, Ireland

Andrei-Dan SORESCU, PhD, Researcher



Photo source: The National Library of Romania



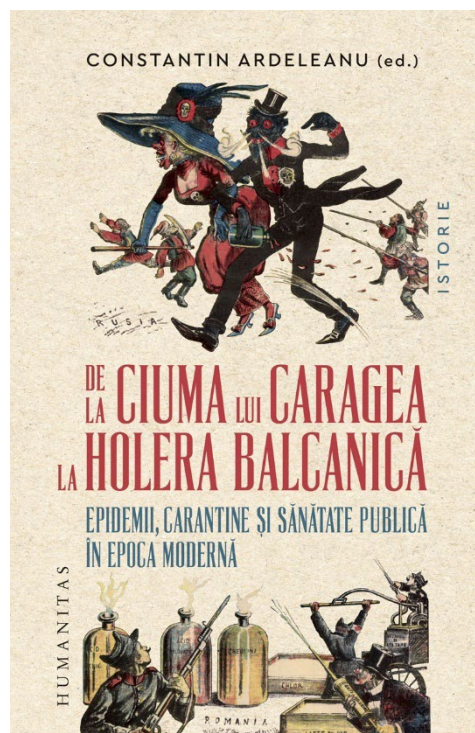
# Entangled Histories of the Danubian Quarantine System (1774–1914) (DaQuaS)

Report on activities by **Constantin Ardeleanu**, Project Leader  
UEFISCDI Exploratory Research (2022-2024)

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The project aimed to investigate the various functions of the quarantine system established along the Lower Danube, in the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia/Romania, from an entangled and global historical perspective and in connection with recent developments in the transdisciplinary field of quarantine studies. The quarantine system was intermittently employed since the eighteenth century, but it was only after 1829 that it was institutionalized. It was then subjected to continuous transformation in order to align with the changing political, economic, and sanitary needs of Romania and to reflect the increased scientific understanding of disease transmission.

One of the main publications of the project is a recent volume, published in December 2024 by *Humanitas*. The volume brings together the work of several Romanian historians who examine how authorities and the population of the Danubian principalities and modern Romania responded to the recurring threats of plague and cholera throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The authors explore a range of compelling topics, many of which remain relevant today, including: the role of state institutions in shaping and enforcing public health policies; the extent of state control over individuals' bodies; the social impact of epidemics and public resistance to government-imposed restrictions; urban development initiatives aimed at improving hygiene and public health; the tension between economic interests and public health in times of crisis; the modernization of medical practices, driven both by scientific advancements and global commercial pressures; transnational efforts to curb the spread of disease along increasingly fast maritime and rail transport routes; the influence of bacteriology and modern medical technology in identifying pathogens and developing new methods of epidemic control; the legal and ethical dilemmas posed by restrictive – and often discriminatory – measures that limited the mobility of certain ethnic or social groups. By shedding light on these issues, this collection not only enriches our understanding of Romania's medical and social history but also offers valuable parallels to contemporary public health challenges.



## **Team members – Project Leader:**

Constantin ARDELEANU, PhD, Researcher, New Europe College, Bucharest / Senior Researcher,  
Institute for South-East European Studies, Bucharest

## **Experienced Researchers:**

Lidia TRĂUȘAN-MATU, PhD, Lecturer, “Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacy,  
Bucharest (Part of the research team starting October 2023)

Silvia MARTON, PhD, Associate Professor, Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest  
(Part of the research team until September 2023)

## **Postdoctoral Researchers:**

Andrei EMILCIUC, PhD, Researcher, The Institute of History, Chișinău

Cosmin KOSZOR-CODREA, PhD, Researcher (Part of the research team starting October 2023)

Andrei-Dan SORESCU, PhD, Researcher (until September 2023)

Project website: <https://daquas.nec.ro/>

# Rule of Law at the European Periphery: (Dis)incentive Structures and Conceptual Shifts (ROLPERIPHERAL)

Report on activities by **Bogdan Iancu**, Project Leader  
UEFISCDI Exploratory Research (2022-2024)

The *Rule of Law at the European Periphery: (Dis)incentive Structures and Conceptual Shifts* project, grapples with centre-periphery interplays in rule of law standard-creation and narratives. The project deals with the way in which evolving rule of law conditionalities and associated institutional discourses influence the operation of national constitutions of the EU member states and, conversely, contribute to the shaping of European constitutionalism at the interface between legal orders.

On September 26-27, 2024 an international conference was organized jointly with the Romanian Association of Constitutional Law (ARDC): *Rule of Law Ideal Models: Centrality under Stress or 'Peripheralization of the World'?* It addressed the connection between central models of the rule of law and specific preconditions and contexts. In the EU, the topic is particularly apposite 20 years after the so-called 'Big Bang Enlargement'. Andrei Pleșu, the President of the project's host institution (Minister of Foreign Affairs during the pre-accession, 1997-1999), beautifully proposed that "[v]iewed historically, Europe looks less like a schematic apricot and more like a pomegranate, with multiple cores." Centrality is however important as the condition for the possibility of gauging conformity with, rapprochement towards, deviation from an ideal model. In nation-state constitutionalism, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the road towards centrality has always implied a mise à niveau of the periphery by incorporation of a prestigious Western constitutional model. The latter was usually itself IKEA-patented on other, even more central practices: Romania (whose elites dubbed it "Belgium of the Orient" at the time) copied the Belgian model in 1866, whereas Belgium, in 1831, looked up to and emulated France, the Netherlands, and England. (Further details on page 41.)



Photo: Europa Regina, Sebastian Münster, 1588

Publications resulting from the project will still come out in 2025, among them a monograph by Bogdan Iancu, another by Marius Bălan, a co-authored monograph in Romanian by all members of the team and a special issue resulting from the 2024 international conference:

*Continuitate și ruptură în constituționalismul românesc – De la Regulamentele Organice și până în prezent*, Hamangiu Publishing House, 2025 (<https://www.hamangiu.ro/continuitate-si-ruptura-in-constituționalismul-romanesc#descriere>)

## Team members – Project Leader:

Bogdan IANCU, Dr.iur, Associate Professor, University of Bucharest, Faculty of Political Science  
(Department of Constitutional and Political Theory and History)

## Experienced Researchers:

Marius Nicolae BĂLAN, Associate Professor, Al. I. Cuza University of Iași, Faculty of Law

Raluca BERCEA, Professor, West University of Timișoara, Faculty of Law

Bianca SELEJAN-GUȚAN, Professor, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Faculty of Law

## Postdoctoral Researchers:

Dr. Cosmin CERCEL, Researcher in Legal History and Theory

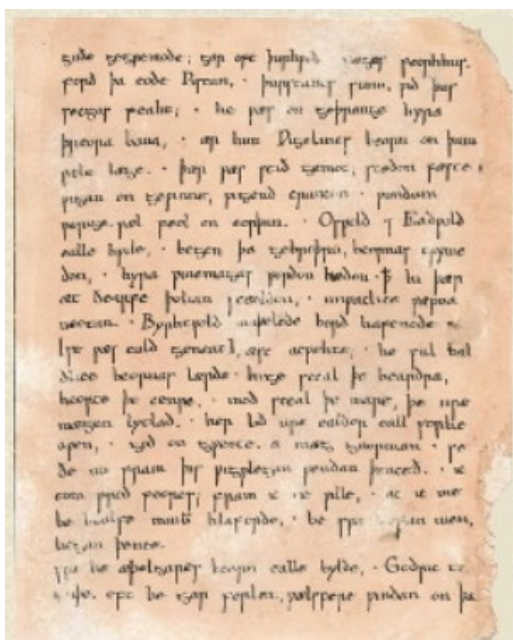
Dr. Martin MENDELSKI, Postdoctoral Researcher in Political Science (February 2023 – December 2024)

# Grammars of Emotion: Shame and the Social Economy of Honour in Medieval Heroic Literatures (GRAMMOTION)

Report on activities by **Cătălin Țăranu**, Project Leader  
UEFISCDI Postdoctoral Research (2023-2025)

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The fourth and final semester in my activity as a director of the project *Grammars of Emotion: Shame and the Social Economy of Honour in Medieval Heroic Literatures* was a period of restless activity aimed at bringing to fruition the planned objectives of this work, but also looking back on the foregoing period and tying up any remaining loose threads.



Research-wise, this semester was dedicated to finalizing the two final articles of this project, the third one exploring emotions unattached to human perceivers in Old English riddles and elegies, the fourth one focusing on shame as a key to texts written at a very turbulent time in Anglo-Saxon history (the turn of the 10<sup>th</sup> century): the heroic poem *The Battle of Maldon* (the picture shows a fragment of the poem), and Archbishop Wulfstan's sermons.

But this project has always also been about collaboration. And so, I continued the work of running the two collective activities. The monthly meetings of the 'Emotions Through History' Working Group, have been particularly fruitful as a venue for open discussion with colleagues where I disseminated my work and received valuable feedback. The working group is proving to be successful both in Romania and abroad (via online participation) in bringing together academics and graduate

students from a variety of fields (history, philosophy, literary studies, anthropology). During this semester we had the final meeting on 19 November 2024 dedicated to topic that drew a large number of participants: 'Using Literature as a Source for the History of Emotions'. At times the only glimpses of affectivity in past societies can be found in their literature. However, the relationship between literary emotion and the affects of flesh-and-blood people has been the subject of much debate. Historians are sometimes wary of using literature as a source for studying the emotional regimes of historical communities, while literary scholars are sometimes content to investigate literature as a *sui generis*, largely virtual realm of fictional affectivity. Yet literary texts both represent and produce emotions, and to do this, they always need to refer to existing codes of affective behaviour, upholding, subverting, and sometimes, creating them.

I have also continued leading the activity of the weekly Medieval Literature Reading Group primarily at students and members of the general public, which consists in reading medieval texts in their original language (Old English, Old Norse and Middle English), and discussing aspects of medieval history, society, and culture. It has enjoyed great success, providing a venue for channeling the interests of enthusiastic non-academics to academic activities connected to my project.

Looking back on the two years of the project, my preliminary conclusion is that it has been a great success, not just in terms of the articles I wrote and my presentations at international scientific events, but also in terms of the connections with other researchers, students, and interested members of the public and the enduring collaborations I have established with them.

The main results of the project have been submitted for publication as four papers and presented at international conferences. The first article (titled *Feeling Besides One's Self: Extended and Enactive Emotion in Old English Verse* submitted to the journal *Comparative Literature*) looks at the Old English



elegies, contradicting the idea that medieval emotions were strictly individual and interior phenomena and showing that they emerged from interactions between humans, non-human persons (animals, plants, and spiritual beings), and their environment. The second article (titled *Time is Out of Joint: Narrative Temporalities and Cognitive Blending in Old English Heroic Poetry* submitted to the journal *Comparative Literature Studies*) explains how intense emotions change the perception of time and the narrative structure of the epic poem *Beowulf*. The third article (titled *Feelings Without a Feeler: Affective Assemblages and Relational Ontology in Old English Verse* submitted to the journal *New Literary History*) explores emotions unattached to human perceivers, occurring in affective atmospheres or feeling things whose identity shifts in time in Old English riddles and elegies, which points to the relational ontology underlying how the makers of these texts understood the world around them. The fourth article (titled *'Shamed Among My People': Prospective Shaming as Socio-emotional Mechanism in Late Anglo-Saxon England* submitted to the journal *Journal of Medieval History*) uses shame, the most social and most intimate emotion, as a privileged entry-point into the dynamics between texts and audience in a number of cultural products emerging at a very turbulent time in Anglo-Saxon history (the 990s to the 1010s) marked by increasing Viking raids and invasions and socio-political dissolution: the heroic poem *The Battle of Maldon*, Archbishop Wulfstan's sermons, penitential royal edicts, all seeking to shame their audiences to shape their behaviour.

The project has also had a strong international dimension, with presentations at conferences in Freiburg, Reykjavik and Leeds, as well as lectures at Bates College (USA) and the "Nicolae Iorga" Institute of History of the Romanian Academy. I am also very pleased about the two important collective endeavours I had the privilege of organizing: the "Emotions Through History" working group, where scholars from different fields (history, literature, sociology, anthropology, philosophy) discussed emotions from different perspectives, shared ideas, and presented their work in progress and a reading group for medieval literature enthusiasts among students and the broader public.

None of this would have been possible without the unfailing support of the NEC staff and colleagues. I am glad to have been part of the vibrant research community of New Europe College.

The project *Grammars of Emotion: Shame and the Social Economy of Honour in Medieval Heroic Literatures* is supported by a grant of the Ministry of European Investment and Projects, project number PNRR-III-C9-2022 – I9, financed by Romania's Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) | European Union.



## Transnational Histories of 'Corruption' in Central-South-East Europe (1750-1850) (TransCorr)

Report on activities by **Silvia Marton**, Principal Investigator  
ERC Advanced Grant (October 2023 – September 2028)

For centuries, South-East-Central Europe grappled with the stigma of corruption. From 1750 to 1850, politicians, scholars, and writers painted a grim picture of graft, nepotism, and bribery as endemic issues. These allegations shaped the region's identity, linking corruption to cultural backwardness and economic under-development. This perception persisted over the years. With this in mind, the ERC-funded TransCorr project will explore how regional leaders repurposed traditional practices, labelling them as corrupt when juxtaposed with Western European modernity ideals. The findings promise to change the way we perceive patronage, graft, and centre-periphery dynamics. The emphasis on the intersection of social and political practice and discourse on 'corruption' in a transnational context constitutes TransCorr's main methodological novelties and contributions of TransCorr to existing scholarship on Central-South-East Europe.



Team members shared their findings to the wider academic community in the framework of TransCorr's regular public research seminars.

Andrei-Dan SORESCU presented his research titled "Historicising the "Colonial" in Nineteenth Century Romania" on 11 October 2024. Intellectual histories of "empire" have long taken centre stage in scholars' attempts to make sense of its attending "-ism" and the long shadows it continues to cast. By contrast, and with less definitional precision as a separate yet connected process, the meanings that the "colonial" held as a category for historical actors themselves have been left comparatively under-researched. That the two are – and were – deeply entwined is a given. And yet, the historical semantics of "colony" and "colonisation" deserve particular attention. As the politics, ethics, and pragmatics of "de-colonising" institutions, knowledge, and cultural praxis have in recent years gripped public imagination, Sorescu's contention is that a deeper knowledge of what "the colonial" meant in its past, original context(s) is equally necessary.

Andrei-Dan SORESCU focused on nineteenth-century Romania as a surprisingly productive case-study for investigating the meanings of "colony" and "colonisation", pervasively recurring concepts in public discourse. From the self-imagining of the nation's origins as the outcome of Roman colonisation to envisioning the "colonial" potential of the Dobruja as a province, or by anxiously connoting German or Jewish presence as potentially "colonising", the literate Romanian public sphere ceaselessly returned to, and attempted to define what these keywords could stand for. The rhetorics of colonial presence in the nation's past, present, and future remained salient across long nineteenth century, he argued, even in a country not directly involved in European processes of imperial expansion.

Constantin ARDELEANU'S talk titled "Politics, "Publicity", and the Denunciation of "Corruption" in the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia (1834–1848)" focused on the period of intense political infighting that followed the appointment of new princes ("hospodars") in 1834 to govern the two principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, in accordance with the "Organic Regulations". Alexandru Dimitrie Ghica in Wallachia and Mihail Sturdza in Moldavia encountered considerable resistance from groups of disaffected boyars. The disagreements were especially pronounced within the Wallachian Assembly, where prince Ghica and the boyars exchanged a multitude of accusations. Facing pressure from various political factions and, more significantly, the loss of imperial Russia's trust, Ghica was ultimately dismissed in 1842. The boyars elected a new prince, Gheorghe Bibescu, a prominent rival of Ghica's. In order to ensure the "good governance" of their respective countries, both Sturdza in Moldavia and Bibescu in Wallachia implemented more authoritarian measures against their political opponents. The censorship of the press was one method utilized to purge the public sphere of potentially disruptive political ideologies or provocations espoused by the opposition.

However, the opposition was not effectively silenced. In newspapers articles or printed brochures smuggled into the principalities, the princes were depicted as utterly "corrupt" leaders who exploited their public office for personal gain and the benefit of their close associates. The princes were denounced as guilty of embezzlement, extortion, nepotism, and conflict of interest. In response, they instructed their associates to disseminate articles and brochures defending their work and levelling accusations of "corruption". Based on diplomatic reports, private correspondence and an analysis of the printed brochures and daily press, Constantin Ardeleanu explained how "corruption" was defined and redefined in South-East-Central Europe and how such definitions were used for asserting or contesting political legitimacies.

#### PUBLICATIONS:

Silvia MARTON and Alex R. TIPEI will co-edit TransCorr's first volume, (provisionally) titled *Conceptualizing Corruption: The "Old Regime" and the New Order in East-Central-South Europe (1750s-1850s)*. Presently, no trans-imperial or transnational history of "corruption" in South-East-Central European between 1750 and 1850 exists. Yet, in these borderlands, nestled between the Russian, Habsburg, and Ottoman empires, "corruption" became a key concept in political and economic debates during an initial era of modernization. To fill in this gap in the literature, contributors to the volume use micro-historical case studies to track how public figures mobilized accusations of "corruption" to

legitimize their political and economic aims and assert their own authority. Equipped with a wide range of linguistic skills and archival know-how, as a group, the authors capture the variety of discursive possibilities that the language of “corruption” offered to the individuals that they study. Micro-empirical research allows the contributors to rethink macro-level processes. The authors address key historiographical issues from practices associated with formal (and informal) imperialism to those linked to the rise of liberalism, capitalism, and nationalism. The manuscript will be submitted to Bloomsbury publisher (within its “A Modern History of Politics and Violence” Series.)



**Funded by  
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#### **Team members**

##### **Project Leader:**

Silvia MARTON, PhD. Associate Professor, Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest

##### **Experienced Researchers:**

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/ Researcher, New Europe College, Bucharest

Augusta DIMOU, PhD. Privatdozentin, Institute of Cultural Studies, Chair of Comparative European History, University of Leipzig

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Mária PAKUCS, PhD. Senior researcher, “N. Iorga” Institute of History, Bucharest, Romanian Academy

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Alex R. TIPEI, PhD. Assistant Professor, University of Montréal

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Oana SORESCU-IUDEAN, PhD. Researcher, Centre for Population Studies,  
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Molly GREENE, PhD. Professor, Princeton University

Frédéric MONIER, PhD. Professor, University of Avignon

##### **Host Institution:**

New Europe College – Institute for Advanced Study, Bucharest

Project website: <https://www.transcorr.eu/>  
<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101098095>

## Reflections on the Political and Social History of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries (GRiPs)

Research Group, since 2009

GRiPs promotes current historical research on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by signaling new publications, doctoral theses and scientific events from a wide range of complementary academic disciplines and subfields. Since 2009, GRiPs has fostered and continues to mentor an interdisciplinary community of advanced doctoral and postdoctoral scholars. It has led to invitations allowing emerging scholars to present their work and receive feedback. GRiPs' ambition is also to encourage a wider European and regional scientific network. The research group is coordinated by NEC alumnae **Constanța VINTILĂ** (Senior researcher, "N. Iorga" Institute of History, Romanian Academy, Bucharest) and **Silvia MARTON** (Associate Professor, Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest). Administrative support is offered by **Constantin ARDELEANU** (Senior Researcher, Institute for South-East European Studies, Bucharest; Researcher, New Europe College, Bucharest).

Following events have been organized during the timeframe October 2024 – February 2025:

### *What is Life? And Which Life Counts? Light and Dark Sides of Empathy in Romanian Literature around 1907*

September 20, 2024

**Valeska BOPP-FILIMONOV**, Junior Professor, Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Germany

This presentation focused on empathy in Romanian literature. Recent debates, like the controversy over Valeriu Nicolae's critique of Bogdan-Alexandru Stănescu's book *Kaspar Hauser*, show the divided responses to racism and sensitivity in literature. While Nicolae highlights racism, other issues such as the treatment of women and animals remain (still) overlooked. The majority of debaters, however, defends the freedom of literature against such concerns. The focus falls on texts from around 1907. The Romanian peasant uprising with its undocumented number of deaths raised the question of the value of human and non-human life. Drawing on Ottmar Ette's concept of literature as a repository of "life knowledge" (*Lebenswissen*) and Fritz Breithaupt's studies on empathy, Valeska Bopp-Filimonov explored how literature reflects ethical issues and analyzed empathy's inclusion or exclusion of "the other". Her argument is that the pre-WWI-period – and the uprising as an accelerator – was an extremely sensitive period holding a great variety of fictional sketches reflecting upon the human condition and creaturely life. Her findings allow for new interpretations of canonical works written during this period, but also invite eco-critical and anthropocentric readings of contemporary texts.



Valeska Bopp-Filimonov is Junior Professor for Romance Studies with focus on Romanian Studies at Friedrich Schiller University Jena in Germany. She finished her PhD in history at Leipzig University with a thesis on family memories of the communist period and the phenomenon of readjusting life-(hi)stories and memories after 1989, methodologically at the interface of discourse analysis and

biographical research. Her current interest is in Romanian literary and cultural history, and at present especially the significance of human-animal representations in Romanian literature; but also the negotiation in cultural discourses as a whole of what life is and to whom it is granted.

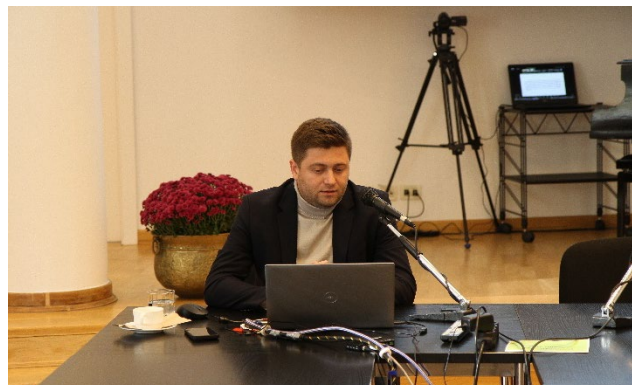
***Legitimități în competiție: putere și opoziție în vremea domniei lui Alexandru D. Ghica / [Competing Legitimacies: Power and Opposition during the Reign of Alexandru D. Ghica]***

October 24, 2024

**Cosmin MIHUȚ**, Lecturer, Faculty of History, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, Iași

The reign of Alexandru D. Ghica ushered in a new stage, the last in the history of Wallachia before the Union, when the features of modern governance and of the public space for the reception and debate of ideas gradually became a reality of historical life, as a result of unprecedented political and institutional changes. Closely associated with the Organic Regulations and accelerated by the Revolution of 1848, these changes were due not only to the regulatory legislative framework, but also to the way in which the elite adapted to the new legal and institutional context, applied and interpreted it in order to promote their interests, aspirations and projects. In this context, the reign of Alexandru D. Ghica was dominated by the confrontation with the opposition in the Assembly, at first heterogeneous, but later organized in the first modern political group in our history - the National Party. The history of its constitution and activity is the central theme of this research, which depicts it against the background of the transformations that took place in the political process. Such transformations are analysed from the perspective of the political institutions (the Governing Body, the Administrative Council, the Assembly of the People), as forms of legitimacy assumed in the exercise of governance, which include the official discourse of "good governance" and "civilization of the fatherland", specific to the reign of the prince, and the national discourse of emancipation, pro-Western and anti-Russian, embraced by the national party in "the sight of the whole country".

Cosmin Mihuț (b. 1988, Iași) is a PhD lecturer at the Faculty of History, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași. His fields of interest are: political history, in particular the study of discursive practices and representations, forms of legitimization and symbolic exercise of power, following the groups and power structures that were active in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the way they were formed, in the context of the constitution of the Romanian national discourse



and the national emancipation movement; history of international relations, in relation to the Great Powers' policy towards the “Eastern Question” and, once the “Romanian Question” was delimited from the whole, the history of the relations of the Romanian Principalities with the Great Powers. In 2023 he published the work *Politică și discurs național în vremea domniei lui Alexandru D. Ghica (1834-1842)*, published by the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași.

***Frica de a pierde trenul. Raporturi de putere în planificarea infrastructurii feroviare din România înainte de Primul Război Mondial / [Fear of Missing the Train. Power Relations in Romanian Rail Infrastructure Planning before World War I]***

December 12, 2024

**Toader POPESCU**, Lecturer, University of Architecture and Urbanism “Ion Mincu”, Bucharest; Researcher, research project “Colonial Anxieties, Corruption Scandals and Xenophobia in Nineteenth-Century Infrastructure Development in Romania” (PN-III-P4-PCE-2021-0399)

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, local administrations had conflicting attitudes towards the integration of towns into the then booming rail network. While fear of the unknown and of change initially led to hesitancy, once the advantages of joining the railway network became apparent, this



quickly turned into a fear of missing opportunities or of “missing the boat” in regional or national competition. In this context, the various actors in urban and rail planning were engaged in negotiations and power games, at a time when the very field of urban and spatial planning was being defined and asserted as a discipline with a scientific doctrine and claims. The resulting picture shows an unstable terrain, with rules and norms fixed in advance, in which each actor tries to maximize the finite resources at stake.

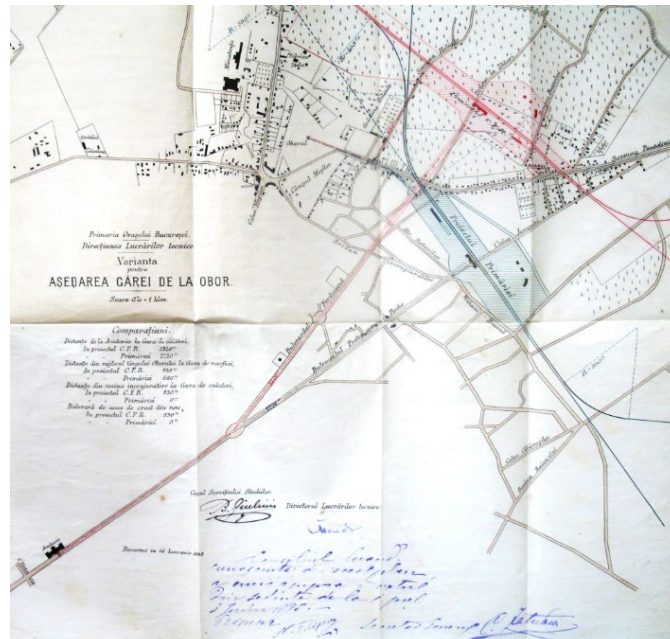


Foto: S.M.B.A.N., fond P.M.B. Tehnic, dos. 1062/1894, f. 7  
(S.M.B.A.N. = Serviciul Mun. Bucureşti al Arhivelor Naţionale)

***Masă rotundă pe marginea cărţii: „Loisir în vremuri de pace şi război. Germanii din Sibiu şi Timișoara” (Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2024) de Daniela Stanciu-Păscărița*** / [Roundtable discussion on the book "Leisure in times of peace and war. Germans from Sibiu and Timișoara" (Mega Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2024) by Daniela Stanciu-Păscărița]

January 30, 2025

**Daniela STANCIU-PĂSCĂRIȚA**, Ștefan Odobleja Fellow; Assistant Professor, “Lucian Blaga” University, Sibiu  
**Cosmin KOSZOR-CODREA**, Researcher, New Europe College, Bucharest

The book *Loisir în vremuri de pace şi război. Germanii din Sibiu şi Timișoara* was published in 2024 by Mega Publishing House, based on Daniela Stanciu-Păscărița's doctoral thesis, defended at the Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca in 2020 under the supervision of Rudolf Gräf. Divided into five chapters, the work is presented as a monograph of the leisure time of the German communities in Transylvania and Banat at the end of the long 19<sup>th</sup> century, analyzing aspects of sociability and urbanity in a period inspired by the imperial models from Vienna and Budapest. The aim of the book is to analyze the dynamics of social relations and the way social actors interact in various contexts of public space, both in the closed setting of cafes and ballrooms and in the open spaces of promenades and parks. Also, through a social interpretation, it proposes an analysis of the urban space as the main arena of the public sphere, a framework that facilitates the manifestation of interests and social interaction among the actors involved.



*Patronaj, profit și politică: o „rețea princiară” în Moldova la jumătatea veacului al XIX-lea /*  
*[Patronage, Profit and Politics: A 'Princely Network' in Moldova in the Mid-19th Century]*

February 27, 2025

**Simion-Alexandru GAVRIȘ**, Researcher, Romanian Academy, Iași, “A. D. Xenopol” Institute of History

Leasing church property was an important source of income for “entrepreneurs” in Moldova and Wallachia in the era of the Organic Regulations (1831/1832-1858). Grigore Mihail Sturdza (b. 1821), the youngest son of the Moldavian ruler Mihail Sturdza (1834-1849), was also a concession holder, returning to his homeland in 1844 after 10 years of studies in France and Prussia, where he was a rather discreet presence in public life - mainly because of his strained relationship with his father. From 1845 onwards, he preferred to engage in profit-making “speculation”, leasing several estates - most of them belonging to unchurched monasteries or to the dioceses of Roman and Huși. For their exploitation, the beizadea Grigore formed a network of collaborators, gathering local petty boyars or traders. The “enterprise” lasted until the early 1850s - accompanied by numerous disputes with the authorities, business partners or serfs. However, Grigore Sturdza's relationship with his main associates continued at least until the end of the decade, when they found themselves among the “activists” of the prince's campaign to acquire the throne of Moldavia.

Simion-Alexandru Gavriș (b. 1981, Iași, Romania) is a scientific researcher at the Romanian Academy - Iași Branch, “A. D. Xenopol” Institute of History. Fields of interest: political and intellectual history of Romanian conservatism, history of parliamentary life, history of bureaucracy. He has published the volumes: *Ipostazele unei biografii politice: Manolache Costache Epureanu*, Iași, Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2013 and *Viața și opiniile prințului Grigore Mihail Sturdza*, Iași, Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2015 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition: 2024), as well as the volume of documents: *Funcționarii din Principatul Moldovei în epoca Regulamentului Organic (1832-1858). Documente*, volume I: *Registrele generale ale Ministerul de Interne și Comitetul Sănătății (1834)*, Iași, Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2022 (in collaboration with Mihai-Cristian Amărieuței).

## The Group for Anthropological Research and Debates (GARD)

Research Group, since 2019

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GARD is a research group within the New Europe College, launched in 2019 at the initiative of our late and much-lamented friend and colleague, **Viorel ANĂSTĂSOAIE**, PhD. GARD focuses on contemporary anthropological research and theories, taking into account their broader relevance within the humanities and social sciences. Building on the continuous support for anthropology during NEC's existence through fellowships, workshops and conferences, this research group aims to provide a space for exchanges, debates, and projects of anthropological relevance for all scholars interested in anthropological research on/in Romania and beyond. Taking advantage of the multidisciplinary and international profile of NEC, inter-disciplinary exchanges between anthropologists and other social scientists are strongly encouraged and anticipated. The monthly meetings adopt, as they did while being coordinated by Viorel Anastăsoaie, a variety of formats including public talks, discussions of pre-circulated papers, film screenings, debates, and roundtable exchanges on newly published relevant books. The group's range of topics and interests is programmatically left as open as possible. The group fosters the broad dissemination of anthropological debates and research results through the publication of articles derived from anthropological studies carried out in Romania and/or issues relevant to the Romanian context in internationally recognized journals. In order to expand and encourage the production of new results in the field of anthropological knowledge, GARD members seek to initiate and develop compelling research

projects and to submit research proposals for competitive national and international funding. Particular attention will be given to calls by EU's research agencies.

GARD is currently supported by a grant of the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitization, CNCS/CCCDI – UEFISCDI, project number PN-IV-P8-8.1-PRE-HE-ORG-2023-0055, within PNCDI IV.

**Coordinators:**

László FOSZTÓ, PhD, Researcher,  
The Institute for Research on National Minorities, Cluj-Napoca  
Giuseppe TATEO, PhD, NEC Alumnus,  
Researcher at the Bruno Kessler Foundation, Trento, Italy  
Cătălina TESĂR, PhD, NEC Alumna,  
Lecturer, The Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest;  
Researcher, National Museum of the Romanian Peasant

The following events have been organized during the timeframe October 2024 – February 2025:

***Film Screening and Debate: "Chöd, the Journey into Cutting the Self" (Eduard Vasile, 2023)***

November 1, 2025

**Eduard VASILE**, PhD in Visual Anthropology, University of Manchester

Set in the heart of Kathmandu's Boudhanath, a vibrant Tibetan Buddhist community, this documentary takes you on a journey into the mysterious and powerful world of Chöd, a tantric practice that means "cutting." Once a secret ritual known only to a few highly trained yogis, Chöd was created by a pioneering female practitioner and has, over the last 15 years, spread across Nepal, the U.S., and Europe. Now, this ancient practice is more accessible than ever. The film follows newly initiated Chöpas, expert monks, and a devoted yogi as they strive to cut through attachments to the self and reach the profound state of emptiness – or enlightenment. This is more than a documentary; it's an invitation to immerse yourself in the transformative power of Chöd and witness the journey beyond the self.



Eduard Vasile holds a PhD in Visual Anthropology from the Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology at the University of Manchester, where he specialized in the Tibetan Buddhist practice of Chöd. He is currently a Senior User Researcher at the Home Office, working within the Migration and Borders Technology Portfolio, where he focuses on understanding the needs and experiences of diverse users to help develop, shape and enhance government policies and services. In addition to his work in government, Eduard Vasile has conducted research at institutions including the Scottish Government, University of Manchester, Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School. He is also an Honorary Lecturer at Queen Mary University of London in the Wolfson Institute of Population Health, where he teaches for to the MSc Global Public Health and Policy program.



*Upscaling Frugality and Unmaking Loss in the Southern Transylvanian Foodscape*

December 5, 2024

**Monica STROE**, Lecturer, Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest

In the past years rural Southern Transylvania has been the site of a revivalist movement centred on the reconstruction and heritagization of ethnic (Saxon) foodscape. The process is mobilised by a complex and cosmopolitan network of social actors engaged in small-scale food production, gastronomy, ecotourism and environmental conservation, fueled by a sense of exonostalgia (Berliner 2014) for an ‘unspoilt’ Arcadia, irreversibly lost in Western Europe. I examine how their representations of past ecology and gastronomy are designed to connect Southern Transylvania to a global economy of sustainability, where frugality, remoteness and dispossession can be converted into added-value and symbolic prestige (see Weiss 2022, Meneley 2021, Bordi 2008). The analysis explores how value and taste are materialised into artisanal food commodities and experiences, particularly in a “cuisine of economy” framework (Weiss 2022), in which low-status foods migrate into the prestige-infused categories of fine-dining cuisine or culinary heritage. These engagements transform the local foodscape into a transnational moral and political arena, in which the heritagisation of the edible past is mobilised as an exclusivist ecological fix to Anthropocenic anxieties.



Monica Stroe is a lecturer at the Department of Sociology, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (Bucharest). She has published research on the impact of agricultural policies on small-scale agriculture and traditional agricultural knowledge, cultural landscapes, food heritage, ethnicity, nationalism and identity politics, middle-class food consumption. Her current research interests include econostalgia and conservation politics, neo-ruralism, food authentication, and the new

dynamics of gastronationalism in the context of the rise of populism.

*Transport Geopolitics at the Margins: Embedded Infrastructures in the Lower Danube Borderlands*

February 20, 2025

**Claudia EGGART**, Visiting Scholar, New Europe College; Researcher, Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS), Berlin

The border triangle between Ukraine, Moldova, and Romania, long marked by economic stagnation, has gained strategic importance following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. With the urgency of new export routes for Ukrainian grain and oil, the European Union has pledged €1 billion to modernize transport networks, customs, storage, and transit infrastructures as part of its Solidarity Lane initiative. This influx of resources has revived neglected and decaying infrastructures, sparking diverse, often competing visions for their redevelopment. Focusing on Moldova – a country positioned between Ukraine and Romania and often framed as ‘in-between’ Eastern and Western influences – this article draws on ethnographic research conducted in 2022–23 to examine local perspectives on infrastructure development. By engaging with the narratives of stakeholders directly involved, this study reveals the underlying logics shaping both tangible and imagined infrastructure projects. The case studies of two key rail and river infrastructure projects demonstrate Moldova’s integration into a broader historical and emerging network of cross-border connections. Our inquiry shows that narratives about infrastructures are deeply entwined with each actor’s geopolitical leanings. Moreover, we argue that the metaphor of the palimpsest better captures the



layered, evolving, and sometimes unexpected trajectories of infrastructure development in Moldova's contested borderlands than a linear path-dependency model.

Claudia Eggart is a social anthropologist with a Ph.D from the University of Manchester. Her recently defended dissertation studied "Lived Geopolitics. Re-scaling Market Infrastructures at retail hubs in Odesa and Bishkek". From 2021-2024 she also worked as a researcher at Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS), as part of the project LimSpaces – Living with Uncertainty. Strategies of Adaptation and Horizons of Expectations in Ukraine and Moldova. At ZOiS, her research focuses on customs and border logistics at the border triangle between Ukraine, Moldova and Romania. In particular, she investigates how the geopolitical tensions in the region affect the lived experiences of logistics workers and the production of infrastructures, both, imagined and materialised. Her work was published in journals like Euro-Asian Studies Journal, Third World Quarterly, and Geopolitics. The article that she presents here today is currently under review in City&Society and was co-authored with Sandra Parvu, a member of the LimSpaces project and Paris-based landscape architect.



## Emotions Through History

Research Group, since 2023

The *Emotions Through History* research group is the product of the collective interests and expertise of its conveners and participants, open to suggestions, ideas and questions. It was created by **Cătălin ȚĂRANU**, NEC Alumnus and scientific researcher, leader of the research project *Grammars of Emotion: Shame and the Social Economy of Honour in Medieval Heroic Literatures*, UEFISCDI Postdoctoral Research. His main interest is, obviously, to research emotions – especially the social function of emotions (in particular shame) in a range of Old and Middle English genres, from heroic verse and chivalric romance to homiletic prose. In the cultural production of past societies, we encounter emotional



Photo: Chute d'Adam et Eve – Adam et Eve chassés du Paradis (France, Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine, Ms 38 f. 006v) | portail.bibliissima.fr

landscapes that appear alien to our sensibilities. Inspired by the recent growth of research dedicated to exploring the inner worlds of people in the past, *Emotions Through History* is a cross-disciplinary working group dedicated to discussing the recent developments on this topic. Scholars and students interested in the theoretical issues arising from the understanding of past affects, passions, sentiments – from antiquity to the modern era, in history, literature, philosophy, and beyond – are warmly welcomed.

Following events have been organized during the timeframe October 2024 – February 2025:

*Using Literature as a Source for the History of Emotions* – November 19, 2024: At times the only glimpses of affectivity in past societies can be found in their literature. However, the relationship between literary emotion and the affects of flesh-and-blood people has been the subject of much debate. Historians are sometimes wary of using literature as a source for studying the emotional regimes of historical communities, while literary scholars are sometimes content to investigate literature as a sui generis, largely virtual realm of fictional affectivity. Yet literary texts both represent and produce emotions, and to do this, they always need to refer to existing codes of affective behaviour, upholding, subverting, and sometimes, creating them. We will then join the rich debate around the uses of literature for reconstructing historical emotions, and as a starting point for our discussion you are invited to read a study laying out some of these themes: Sif Rikhardsdottir, 'Medieval emotionality: The feeling subject in medieval literature', *Comparative Literature* 69 (2017), 74-90.

## NEC-TECH: Technology, Culture, Humanities

Research Group, since 2023

Report on activities by **Andreea EȘANU**, co-leader of the group, together with **Răzvan NICOLESCU**

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NEC-TECH is a multi-disciplinary research group that has been active at New Europe College since 2023. Its aim is to foster dialogue, reflection, and understanding on the fast-evolving technologies of our times, including social media, smart devices, and artificial intelligence. The focus of the group is on the discussion of aspects, dimensions, and impact(s) of such technologies in our lives, in our communities, and more generally in our worldviews.



Currently, the group functions as a reading group with bimonthly meetings, in which the members and their guests discuss texts (books, articles, and research papers). The group also welcomes presentations of original research papers and work in progress from its members or from guests.

The recent activities of the group include: a discussion of Imre Lakatos' programmatic work *Falsification and the methodology of scientific research programmes*, a debate with the participation of colleagues from UBB Cluj on the (ethical) use of nanotechnologies in medicine, a discussion on *The Feel of Algorithms* – a recent research contribution in anthropology by Minna Ruckenstein, a round table on the topic of whether current research in artificial intelligence, led by big-tech companies and start-ups (such as Google-DeepMind,

OpenAI, Anthropic etc.) fits the model of traditional scientific (experimental) research or not, and a reading group on legal and moral aspects of facial recognition technologies.

The group also hosted a public lecture by Professor Mircea Flonta from the University of Bucharest and the Romanian Academy on the multifaceted and delicate relationship between humanities and the sciences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. (Further details on page 47.)

### Coordinators:

Andreea EȘANU, PhD, NEC Alumna; (non-tenure) Assistant Professor at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Philosophy; Publications & Digitalization Coordinator at NEC

Răzvan NICOLESCU, PhD, NEC Alumnus

#### Partners:

The Institute for Logic and Data Science (ILDS), a non-profit independent research institute dedicated to the spread and advancement of logic-based and data-oriented scientific methods.

#### Members:

Alec BĂLĂȘESCU, PhD, Associate Faculty, Royal Roads University, Head of Corporate Engagement at Casa Paleologu

Cristian DUCU, PhD, General Manager of the Centre for Advanced Research in Management and Applied Ethics (CARMAE)

Florin GOGIANU, PhD Candidate in Deep Reinforcement Learning at the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca; Researcher at Bitdefender

Andrei SIPOȘ, PhD, Associate Professor at University of Bucharest, Department of Computer Science; Scientific Researcher at Simion Stoilow Institute of Mathematics of the Romanian Academy; Member of the executive board of ILDS

Matei STOENESCU, PhD

#### Doctoral Students:

Larisa GOGIANU, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Bucharest

Petrișor IVAN, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Bucharest

## Environmental Humanities

Research Group, since 2024

Report on activities by **Cosmin MINEA**, co-leader of the group, together with **Valeska BOPP-FILIMONOV** and **Cosmin KOSZOR-CODREA**

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This research group is an interdisciplinary collaboration between three scholars who critically analyze the development of ideas about the natural landscape in Romania, the interaction between humans and nature and the relation between nature and the political, artistic and social spheres. We are interested in themes such as the interrelation between rural architectural heritage and the Carpathian landscape, the relationship between the history of nature conservation and the history of science, alpine history, the development of forestry, and the ecological history of Romania and Central and Eastern Europe, literary representations of nature and human and non-human animal encounters in Romanian literature and visual arts.

During the timeframe September / October 2024 – February 2025 the group continued its series of regular meetings, public events and the individual research of each member. The meetings focused on ways to engage with current theories in Environmental Humanities and their suitability to the group members' own research. In particular they questioned how one can think from a multispecies' perspective while also bringing in non-human perspectives or at the very least the non-human agency into their research topic. Three public events were organized online, followed by discussions with the participants and afterwards by discussions only within the focus group:

#### *Aquagnosis in the Heart of Modern Europe*

September 17, 2024

**Anna BARCZ**, Professor, T. Manteuffel Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences

This talk developed and explored the concept of aquagnosis through the lens of river flood narratives. It began by situating gnosticism within the environmental humanities and their literary contexts. Then it investigated the specific, weird form of aquagnostic poetics that can be applied to river floods narratives across different regions of the world, with a focus on how modern European river floods contribute to the broader gnostic traditions. Central to this discussion was an analysis of the river flood narrative in *The Willows* (1907) by Algernon Blackwood, a text that weirdly portrays the Danube River as a monstrous,



animated being. This portrayal challenges the traditional anthropocentric perspectives and introduces a unique form of aquagnostic realism that lacks significant parallels in the heart of modern European culture. The methodological approach of the research involves close literary reading and interpretation by employing animistic categories and monstrous river poetics. As a result, the case study of *The Willows* has broader implications for understanding how river flood narratives contribute to our weird experience of



*Caspar David Friedrich, Willow Bush under a Setting Sun (between circa 1832 and circa 1835)*

environmental agency in the Anthropocene. In essence, this paper situated the Danube's monstrous narrative beyond the Europocentric constraints of modern knowledge.

Anna Barcz is an Associate Professor at the T. Manteuffel Institute of History (Spatial History Lab), Polish Academy of Sciences (PAS) in Warsaw. She has held European fellowships, including the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship at the Trinity Long Room Hub (Trinity College Dublin) and the Rachel Carson Center Fellowship at LMU Munich. She was trained as a philosopher and literary scholar at the University of Warsaw and the Institute of Literary Research (PAS). Her main research projects focus on rediscovering various cultural sources that

influence environmental narratives, particularly those related to rivers such as the Odra/Oder (2016-2018), Vistula (2019-2023), and main European rivers (2024 – now). The results of her teams' work have been published in key journals that contribute to the eco-debate and emphasize the humanities' role in it (e.g. *Environmental Hazards*, *Space and Culture*, *Water History*, *Secondary Texts*, *Environmental Humanities* – forthcoming in 2025). She is also the author of three monographs: "Environmental Cultures in Soviet East Europe: Literature, History and Memory" (Bloomsbury 2021); "Animal Narratives and Culture: Vulnerable Realism" (CSP 2017); "Ecorealism: from Ecocriticism to Zoocriticism in Polish Literature" (in Polish, 2016).

### *The Aesthetics of Atmosphere. An Ecophenomenological Perspective*

November 19, 2024

**Mădălina DIACONU**, Associate Professor, Institute of Philosophy, University of Vienna

Compared to climate ethics, the aesthetics of weather and climate is still in an incipient phase. The topic of weather conditions is situated at the intersection of recent subdisciplines of aesthetics, such as environmental aesthetics, everyday aesthetics, the New Phenomenology of atmosphere (in the sense of affective ambiance) and the aesthetics of science. The lecture claims that the aforementioned directions of investigation can be interlaced so that an aesthetic theory of weather may fully develop its potential to foster sustainable patterns of behavior, support scientific communication and unprecedentedly extend the scope of artistic media.

Mădălina Diaconu is Privatdozentin at the Institute of Philosophy of the University of Vienna and lecturer at the Department for Romance Studies of the same university. Her latest book is *Aesthetics of Weather* (Bloomsbury, 2024).

### *The Socialist Reeds: Transnational Plant Lives and Technologies in the Danube Delta*

January 27, 2025

**Călin COTOI**, NEC Alumnus, Professor, University of Bucharest

In 1950s socialist Romania, a small city, modelled on the Soviet "science cities", was erected in the marshes of Danube Delta, around the scientific research of reed. It is there that the new preparations for economic development, based on the exploitation of local reed (*Phragmites australis*) and acclimatization of "Italian reed" (*Arundo donax*), happened. In the Romanian cash-strapped economy, after WWII, almost



no effort was spared for this project, as it stumbled on the multiple ontologies of reed. A florid scientific, technical and biological imagination developed around and through the reed growing wetlands. A transnational hub of plants, scientists, plans, machines, imaginaries and hopes developed in the middle of the Danube Delta. The economic development of large wetlands through biological and technological research was deeply entangled with plants' lives and histories, and their multiple ontologies. The deeply rhizomatic character of *Phragmites australis*, its ways of moving, changing and aggregating in the Delta was framed by heavy machinery, political and scientific imaginaries. The ways in which reeds entwined with technology profoundly re-shaped the local human communities, as they were redistributed alongside new extractivist projects and means of resisting them, in common plant-human strategies of "weapons of the weak". The Danube Delta reeds are rhizomatic in both metaphorical and literal ways, and their metaphorical, Deleuzian flows are part of their botanical ways of being and reproducing. They are both material and rhetorical reality, that makes them "good to think with" not just a la Levi-Strauss, but also like Haraway's figurations. As they became, in the 1950-60s, the linchpin of the new developmentalist-socialist framing of the Danube Delta, reeds, in their hard to disentangle material-rhetorical being, turned out to be critical tropes, in Haraway's sense, that foster and amplify already existing practices to open new potential alliances and possibilities for criticizing power relations and ways of being. Reeds can provide the kind of space and rhizomatic ambiguous resistance through which, and in alliance with, socialist developmentalism, post-socialism nature protection, EU agricultural and nature policies can be understood and reframed again and again. Călin Cotoi argues that the socialist ecological debate centered on reeds has never died down completely and it is part of present-day re-understandings of the neo-colonial governance of "wild nature" in the wetlands of Eastern Europe.

Călin Cotoi has a medical degree from the Faculty of Medicine, Cluj-Napoca. He holds a BA in sociology and PhD in philosophy. He is Professor at the University of Bucharest, at the Department of Sociology. He is an Alumnus of Center for Advanced Studies Sofia, Collegium Budapest, New Europe College, Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, Woodrow Wilson Center, and Indiana University. He has done research and published in the areas of political anthropology, history of medicine and public health, environmental sociology, and ethnicity studies.

### Spotlight – Audiovisual Capturing of Dynamics of Place Attachment and Identity in Central and Eastern Europe

Summer school on documentary filmmaking in social sciences

September 8-15, 2024

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The Summer school was organized with the generous financial contribution of the University of St. Gallen, Centre for Governance and Culture in Europe, by New Europe College and the National University of Theater and Cinematography “I.L. Caragiale”.

The organizers acknowledge and are grateful for the in-kind contributions and co-operation of the co-organizers of the Spotlight summer school: University of Opole, Opole, Poland; HUN-REN RCAES Geographical Institute, Budapest, Hungary; Association Opolskie Lamy, Opole, Poland; FORTHEM Diversity and Migration Lab University of Opole, Opole, Poland; Moving.Lab, Luxemburg.



Lecturers:

Ágnes ERŐSS, Karina GAIBULINA, Clara KLEININGER, Ana VLAD, Michał WANKE

## International Conferences & Lectures

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### Rule of Law Ideal Models: Centrality under Stress or ‘Peripheralization of the World’?

This event is organized within the research project titled *Rule of Law at the European Periphery: (Dis)incentive Structures and Conceptual Shifts* (ROLPERIPHERAL) supported by UEFISCDI – Exploratory Research (PN-III-P4-PCE-2021-0319) and hosted by New Europe College. September 26-27, 2024

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This year’s annual conference, organised jointly with the Romanian Association of Constitutional Law (ARDC), addressed the connection between central models of the rule of law and specific preconditions and contexts. The topic is apposite in context, precisely 20 years after the so-called ‘Big Bang Enlargement’ and reinvents old questions in new contexts. Where is the core that should provide the RoL model? In the EU/CoE, for instance, are supranational/international institutions the core in terms of rule of law/*Rechtsstaat* norm-generation? Or is the core rather the ideal-typical, historically grounded model of a law-based mature constitutional democracy of the Western variety? Should conditionalities and standards, in European context, be/have been related to specific practices in Western jurisdictions (*Rechtsstaaten*, rule of law-based states)? If so, what would be the properly calibrated common denominator? Are there multiple cores and multiple peripheries?



Photo: Opicinus de Canistris, World Map (Vatican Lat. 6435 folio 79v.)

#### Conveners:

Mihai BĂDESCU (President,  
ARDC / Professor, Academy of  
Economic Studies)  
Ștefan DEACONU (Professor,  
University of Bucharest / Director,  
Centre for the Study of Constitutional  
Law and Political Institutions /  
ARDC)  
Bogdan IANCU (Principal  
Investigator, ROLPERIHERAL-NEC /  
Associate Professor, University of  
Bucharest/ ARDC)  
Elena-Simina TĂNĂSESCU  
(Professor, University of Bucharest /  
Judge, Constitutional Court of  
Romania/ ARDC)

#### Participants:

Mihai BĂDESCU, Marius BALAN, Raluca BERCEA, Cosmin CERCEL, Adam CZARNOTA,  
Dan Claudiu DĂNIȘOR, Ștefan DEACONU, Ionuț-Bogdan DIMA, Iosif FRIEDMANN – NICOLESCU,  
Sarah GANTY, Barbara GRABOWSKA-MOROZ, Bianca GUȚAN, Andrei IACUBA, Bogdan IANCU,  
András JAKAB, Dimitry V. KOCHENOV, Martin LOUGHLIN, Andrei-Răzvan LUPU,  
Alexandra MERCESCU, Mariana MOTA PRADO, Michał PAŹDZIORA, Ramona Delia POPESCU,  
Marieta SAFTA, Maja SAHADŽIĆ, Julian SCHOLTES, Oana ȘTEFAN, Simina Elena TĂNĂSESCU,  
Attila VINCZE, Veaceslav ZAPOROJAN, Michael A WILKINSON

## Order and Hierarchy in Late Antique and Byzantine Thought

This event was organized within the research project *Order and Hierarchy in Late Antique and Byzantine Thought* (PN-III-P4-PCE-2021-0417; PI: Dr. Marilena VLAD) funded by UEFISCDI and hosted by the Institute of South-East European Studies, Bucharest.  
October 10, 2024

Focusing on the idea of order and hierarchy, this project aims to prove that there is a major shift of perspective, which marked the passage from Late Antique philosophy to Byzantine theological thought. We will analyze and clarify the transition from a paradigm of order understood as “structure of reality” (in the thought of Late Neoplatonism) to a new paradigm of order understood as “hierarchy” or “sacred order” (in the works of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, who then influenced the Byzantine thought). The project is divided into three major parts. We first elucidate the core of the problem in the works of Proclus and Damascius, giving a comprehensive interpretation of the Neoplatonic problem of order, and show how the vocabulary of order determines the Neoplatonic view of reality. We subsequently explain the constitution of “hierarchy” as a radically different understanding of order in the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, and try to prove that Dionysius uses the Neoplatonic concepts of order, but interprets them differently and eventually overturns the Neoplatonic perspective. We finally explore the influence of the Dionysian concept of hierarchy on the Byzantine thought, namely the way in which this new concept of “sacred order” disseminated in the works of Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, Theodore the Studite, and Niketas Stethatos.

(<https://hierarchyproject.wordpress.com/presentation/>)



## Order and Hierarchy in Late Antique and Byzantine Thought



October 10, 2024  
New Europe College  
Plantelor, 21, Bucharest

### Conveners:

Bogdan TĂTARU-CAZABAN,  
Marilena VLAD

### Participants:

Michele ABBATE, Mircea DULUȘ, Delphine LAURITZEN, Frederick LAURITZEN, Ernesto MAINOLDI, Bogdan TĂTARU-CAZABAN, Ovidiu SFERLEA, Dimitrios VASILAKIS, Marilena VLAD

## Fighting Pandemics in Southeast Europe: Experts, Infrastructure, and Technologies in the Long 19<sup>th</sup> Century

This event was organized in the framework of the project *Entangled Histories of the Danubian Quarantine System (1774–1914)*, Code PN-III-P4-PCE-2021-1374, supported by UEFISCDI (2022–2024) and hosted by New Europe College.

October 17-18, 2024

### Convener:

Constantin ARDELEANU

### Participants:

Constantin ARDELEANU, Anna BATZELI,  
Octavian BUDA, Simion CÂLȚIA,  
Andrei EMILCIUC, Abdulhamit KIRMIZI,  
Cosmin KOSZOR-CODREA, Silvia MARTON,  
Ozan OZAVCI, Emilia PLOSCEANU,  
Christian PROMITZER, Lidia TRĂUȘAN-  
MATU, Maria ZARIFI

Further details about the project can be found  
on page 24.



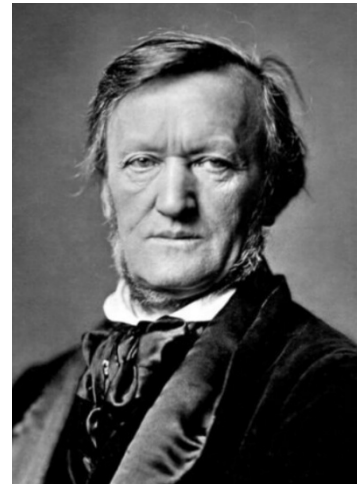
Photo: Doctors in the Bacteriological Research Laboratory, Sulina, 1930  
(National Archives of Romania, Galați Branch)

# In (continued) Search of Wagner: Criticism and the Limits of Legitimate Interpretation

**Patrick ZUK**, Musicologist and Director (Arts and Humanities) of the Institute for Advanced Study at the University of Durham  
October 31, 2024

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Notwithstanding his exceptional importance in the history of nineteenth-century music and his far-reaching influence on cultural life, the German composer Richard Wagner (1813-1883) remains a controversial figure, even if his music dramas based on Germanic mythology and mediaeval historical subjects occupy an immovable place in the operatic repertory. The acrimonious debates about the value of his creative achievement show no sign of abating: indeed, it is difficult to think of another artist whose oeuvre continues to attract such intense moral opprobrium and markedly hostile critical responses. In addition to long-standing allegations that Wagner's work gives covert expression to antisemitism, recent commentators have claimed to discern in it a wider range of objectionable outlooks, including racism and misogyny. This turbulent reception history raises issues which have assumed heightened relevance in the contemporary critical climate, given the growing tendency to appraise artworks predominantly in light of social justice concerns. Paramount amongst these are the validity of the hermeneutic strategies that Wagner's critics have employed, which often seem to rely on simplistic assumptions about the connections between an artist's life and work, and the related problem of the limits of legitimate interpretation—in other words, how to establish the boundary between a responsible reading of an artwork and merely reading things into it that are insufficiently supported by evidence. I will elucidate these questions with particular reference to Wagner's last music drama *Parsifal* (1882), perhaps the most contentious of his creations.



## Tourism, Infrastructure, and Modernity in the Carpathians from the Nineteenth Century to the Present

This event was organized within the *Lapedatu* Fellowship Program at the New Europe College, supported by the *Lapedatu* Foundation.  
November 18, 2024

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**Convener:** James KORANYI and  
Claudiu OANCEA

**Participants:** Raluca ALEXANDRESCU,  
Mioara ANTON, Constantin ARDELEANU,  
Raluca CERNAHOSCHI, Alexandra Simona  
COȚOFANĂ, Enikő DÁCZ, David DIACONU,  
James KORANYI, Cosmin KOSZOR-CODREA,  
Claudiu OANCEA, Catherine ROTH,  
Adelina ȘTEFAN, Andreas WILD

This workshop explored the intersection of tourism, infrastructure and modernity in the southern and eastern Carpathians from the nineteenth century to the present. It brought together scholars whose work engages with questions of modernity in the Carpathians in an interdisciplinary way. The workshop encouraged research





conversations that approach the Carpathians as a central place for negotiating modernity and take the agency of Carpathian actors seriously. This workshop thus built on existing scholarship on the (broader) region while moving beyond analyses that further embed divisions of east-west, upland-lowland, development-underdevelopment.

## Perspectives on Agency in British Culture and Cultural Studies

This event was organized by the *Centre of Excellence for the Study of Cultural Identity* (CESIC) and the *British Cultural Studies Centre* (BCSC) of the University of Bucharest, in collaboration with New Europe College (NEC).

November 21, 2024

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### Conveners:

Maria-Sabina DRAGA-ALEXANDRU and Andreea PARIS-POPA

### Keynote lecture:

Sorana CORNEANU

### Participants:

Alexandra BACALU, Ioana CIUCĂ, Irina COSTACHE, Ana COMAN, Maria-Sabina DRAGA-ALEXANDRU, Dragoș IVANA, Andreea MOISE, Daria NEDELEA, Diana NOVĂCEANU, Daniel-Gabriel OPRIȘ, Andreea PARIS-POPA, Alexandra SERBENCO, Tamara STERMIN, Bogdan ȘTEFĂNESCU, Antonia VĂRZARU

Understood in philosophy and culture as the capacity of individuals to make free choices and act independently, with their actions or interventions producing particular effects in the world around, agency has in recent times been referred to as characterizing not only humans, but also animals and even plants, with possible extensions to the natural environment and material objects (Colligs 2023). The importance of agency in society and culture ranges from theoretical to concrete issues related to political emancipation movements and the possibility of change. Since Margaret Archer's analysis of the autonomous role of culture in sociological thinking (1988) through the emancipation movements of the last decades of the 20th century and the rise of environmental studies, posthumanism and plant and animal studies (Donna Haraway 1991 and 2003, Rosi Braidotti 2013), the meanings of agency in cultural studies have diversified and expanded. This may include agents not traditionally invested with the capacity to decide, such as children (Jens Qvortrup 2005), migrants and racial, sexual and ethnic minorities (Mieke Bal 2011) and even nonhumans and inanimate entities (Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann 2014). How is agency understood in contemporary British society and culture and in British Cultural Studies? What are its implications in literature and the arts of all times? What challenges do the new definitions of agency raise and how do they relate to the history of the concept?

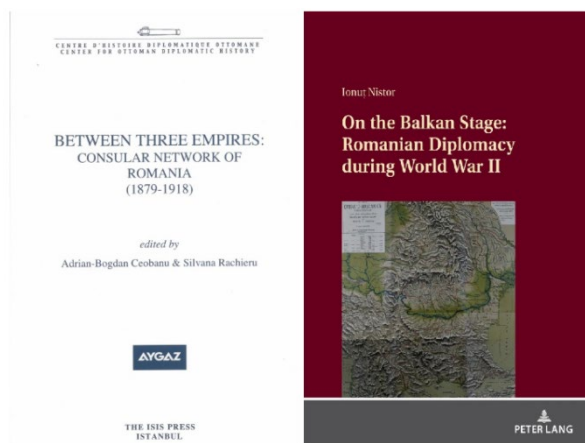




### Diplomația românească în Balcani (1878–1945). Noi contribuții [*Romanian Diplomacy in the Balkans (1878-1945). New contributions*]

This roundtable was organized in cooperation with the Institute for South-East European History  
October 15, 2024

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#### Participants:

Adrian-Bogdan CEOBANU, Doru LICIU, Ionuț NISTOR, Silvana RACHIERU

#### Moderator:

Daniel CAIN

The roundtable discussion follows the launch of the volumes *Between Three Empires: Consular Network of Romania (1879–1918)*, Istanbul, The Isis Press, 2024, by Adrian-Bogdan Ceobanu, Silvana Rachieru (Eds.), and *On the Balkan Stage: Romanian Diplomacy during World War II*, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2024 by Ionuț Nistor.

### Identities vs. Rights. Past, Present and Future of a Research Topic

Focus group *Identity, Legitimacy and Civil Society* after 25 years  
November 1, 2024

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The essential problem of the Romanian society is the correct setting of the relationship between *good* and *right*. *good* represents particular identities, *right* represents universal claims and thus are operating in different spheres. The rule of law is, fundamentally, an *instrument* that must ensure, through a system of fair rules and procedures, the accommodation of different private interests, without establishing a consensus on the common good. The so often invoked "dominion" or "supremacy of the law" means, in fact, the effective achievement of a normative priority of law in relation to the good (individual or collective). The transition was, in general, seen as a process towards democracy. Ovidiu Caraiani proposes analyzing it as a *normative commitment* for a certain procedural framework. Without accepting the regulative idea of the minimum conditions for a civil association, the project of an inclusive policy remains a utopia.

#### Convener:

Ovidiu CARAIANI, NEC Alumnus; Coordinator of the focus group  
*Identity, Legitimacy and Civil Society*

#### Online presentation:

Thomas POGGE

#### Participants:

Ionuț BUTOI, Oana DERVIȘ, Nicolae DOBREI, Adelin Costin DUMITRU, Florin MITREA, Claudia POSTELNICESCU, Vlad TERTELEAC, Mircea TOBOȘARU, Paula TOMI, Alexandru VOLACU

**Other guests (online or on-site):** Catherine AUDARD, Judy BATT, Rex MARTIN, Onora O'NEILL, Peri ROBERTS

# Cultură umanistă și cultură științifică [*Humanistic culture and scientific culture*]

Mircea FLONTA in dialogue with Andreea EȘANU  
November 28, 2024

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A discussion on two studies: „Cunoașterea științifică în imaginea gânditorului umanist” / [*Scientific Knowledge from the Perspective of the Humanist Thinker*] and „Epilog: Știința este modestă!” / [*Epilogue: Science is modest!*] signed by Prof. Mircea Flonta in his recently reissued book, „Imagini ale științei” (Ratio et Revelatio, 2024).

Mircea Flonta is Professor Emeritus at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Bucharest and member of the Romanian Academy. Specialized in epistemology, philosophy of science and analytic philosophy, he has translated fundamental works by David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Albert Einstein.

Andreea Eșanu is a NEC Alumna, currently publications & digitalization coordinator at NEC. She is a (non-tenure) Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Bucharest. Early analytic philosophy, philosophy of science and the philosophy of biology count among her research interests.

## Roundtable on the Book: “Religia clandestină în documentele poliției secrete. O istorie în imagini” (Humanitas, 2024) [*Clandestine Religion in Secret Police Documents. A History in Pictures*]

This book is the result of a research project entitled *Creative Agency and Religious Minorities: ‘Hidden Galleries’ in the Secret Police Archives in Central and Eastern Europe*, ERC Starter Grant December 5, 2024

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This Hidden Galleries project concerns the role of religious minorities in the transformation of Central and Eastern Europe societies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century seen through the prism of the secret police archives in the region. The project re-examines and re-contextualises the holdings of secret police archives



in three countries; Romania, the Republic of Moldova and Hungary, with the aim drawing scholarly and public attention to alternative uses and meanings of the archives in relation to the study of minority religions. The secret police archives, in addition to containing millions of files on individuals and organisations monitored by the state, also constitute a hidden repository of religious art, publications, photographs and the ephemera of religious life confiscated by the secret police. Many religious communities, but especially religious minorities, were repressed and persecuted in the twentieth century under both fascism and communism and their visual and literary creative responses to authoritarian rule have remained concealed in vast storehouses of secret files. The aim of the project to retrieve examples of this visual and literary material from the archives in order to shed fresh light on the role that local and minority religious groups played in challenging the hegemonic order through their creative artistic and cultural production

and better understand the power of these art works to materialise the sacred, transform beliefs and create new subjectivities. (Website of the project: <https://hiddengalleries.eu/about/>)

**Organizers:** James KAPALO (Principal Investigator), Anca ȘINCAN – Editors of the volume

**Participants:** Ionuț BILIUȚĂ, Iuliana CÎNDREA NAGY, Alexandru GROZA,  
Laura JIGA ILIESCU, Gabriela NICOLESCU

The story, like all the others in this book, was shaped not only by the secret police and its archives, but also by the creativity, faith and tenacity of these communities to survive underground. This book, the project behind it, the public exhibitions, the digital database from which it has grown, is an interlocutor in the ongoing dialogue between the archives and those persecuted by the repressive organs of the state over the fate of their heritage or the community to which they belong.



## [STEPPE Debate] Romanian Constitutional Court's Invalidation of the 2024 Presidential Elections

This conference was organized in the framework of the project *Scaling the Transnational. Entangled Political Imaginaries and Practices in East and West Europe* (STEPPE), in cooperation with the CEU-Democracy Institute, Budapest, Institute of Political Science, Leipzig and Center Marc Bloch, Berlin. February 6, 2025

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### Speakers:

Vlad PERJU, Harvard Law School

*Reflections on the Constitutional Annulment of the Presidential Elections in Romania*

Bogdan IANCU, University of Bucharest

*Liberal, Illiberal and Structural Authoritarianism: The Invalidation of the Romanian Presidential Elections*

Sergiu MIȘCOIU, Babes Bolyai University (Cluj)

*'Le government des judges': a syndrome or a remedy in times of democratic crisis?*

### Moderators:

Camil PÂRVU, New Europe College, Bucharest / University of Bucharest

Isabella LÖHR, Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History in Potsdam (ZZF) / CMB Berlin

### Discussants:

Renata UITZ, CEU – Democracy Institute, Budapest / Royal Holloway, University of London

Dietmar MÜLLER, Institute of Political Science at Leipzig University

The STEPPE project seeks to offer an innovative take on studying the transnational engagement of political movements and ideological paradigms across the symbolic dividing line of Western and Eastern Europe. It focuses on multi-directional transfers and interactions, transnational imaginaries of the self and the other, and the underlying experiences that came to shape the European public sphere in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus, it seeks to accentuate the politics of East-West entanglement as key, but often overlooked, component of European political culture and social imaginary. (<https://steppe.hypotheses.org/>)



The online debate delved into the Romanian Constitutional Court's controversial decision in December 2024 to annul the presidential elections. The discussion not only examined the annulment itself (and the constitutional reasons invoked by the Court) but also explored its broader implications for democracies across Europe. The challenges that prompted this extraordinary decision are not unique to Romania and resonate with issues faced by other European democracies (e.g., the rapid degradation of democratic public deliberations and the oversized electoral effects of opaque social networks). The panel aimed to shed light on these common threats and potential responses to safeguard democratic integrity.

## Musical Encounters with Young Performers

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### Recital

Șerban-Andrei DUȚĂ (violin) and Irina MINCULESCU (piano),  
University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna  
February 28, 2025

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#### Repertoire:

Maurice Ravel, Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 2 in G Major M. 77

Claude Debussy, Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Minor, L. 140

Johann Sebastian Bach/Ferruccio Busoni, Chaconne in D minor, BWV 1004

Niccolò Paganini, Nel cor più non mi sento (Introduction & Variations)

Șerban-Andrei DUȚĂ and Irina MINCULESCU, currently students of the prestigious University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna (MDW), started exploring the art of music as children. Later on, they were classmates at “George Enescu” Music Highschool in Bucharest.



Șerban-Andrei DUȚĂ began studying the violin at the age of 6 with professor Magdalena Popescu; as a highschool student he continued studying with professor Carmen Runceanu, while at MDW he is studying with professor Albena Danailova. He has performed in prestigious concert halls such as the Romanian Athenaeum, Sibiu State Philharmonic, “George Enescu” Museum and at HMDK Stuttgart. He has taken music classes with great violinists such as Pavel Vernikov, Petru Munteanu, Krzysztof Węgrzyn and Alexandru Tomescu.

Irina MINCULESCU graduated from “George Enescu” Music Highschool in Bucharest in 2022, and is currently studying piano with professor Christopher Hinterhuber at MDW. From 2019 to 2023 she studied with pianist Eduard Kunz and participated in the Kunz Piano Academy concert series. She has given recitals in various venues (concert halls, international institutions or museums) such as Brașov Philharmonic, Arad Philharmonic, “George Enescu” Museum, Peleş Castle in Sinaia, Romanian Cultural Institute in Vienna and Ehrbar Palais in the same city. In 2022 she made her orchestral debut with Master Orchestra Brescia and her solo debut at the International Chamber Music Festival Lago di Garda/ Cultura in Musica Limes, Italy. In 2024 she performed for the first time in Europe Lera Auerbach's works (“24 Preludes for Viola and Piano” and “24 Preludes for Cello and Piano”) at MDW.



# Financial support

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Confederazione Svizzera  
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Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Economic Affairs,  
Education and Research EAER

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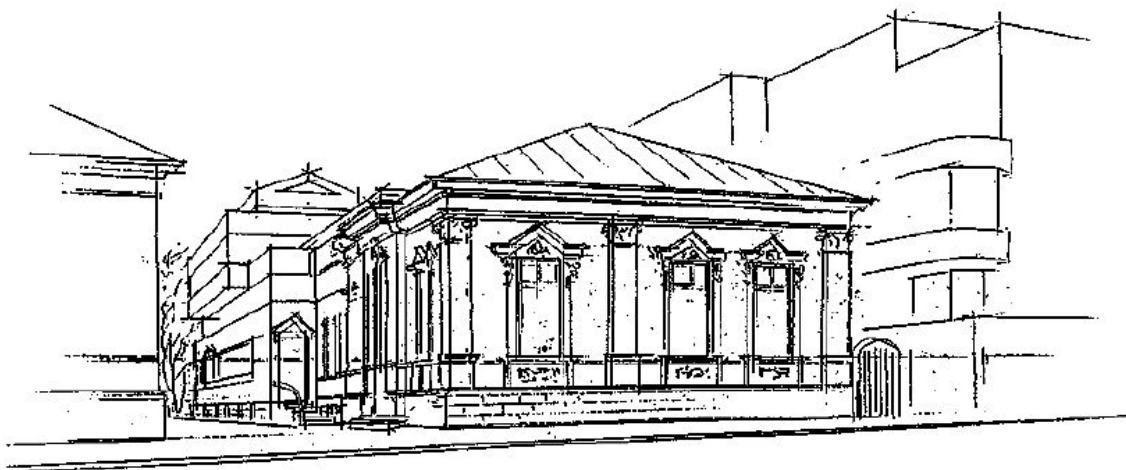
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