

letters from the literary works of the

T A N D E M

Author with Translator - Translator with Author

fellowships at

New Europe College, Bucharest,

a program supported by

S. Fischer Stiftung, Berlin and

Rotary Club Frankfurt am Main-Städel



T A N D E M

Author with Translator - Translator with Author

how it all started



Photo:
Mihaela Danga, *Tandem* coordinator
Katharina Biegger, Strategic Advisor, Center for Governance
and Culture in Europe, University of St. Gallen
Anni Sarukhanyan, *Tandem* Fellow (2023/2024)

Bridging Worlds: The Place of Literary Translation in an Institute for Advanced Study

Since 2010, New Europe College - Institute for Advanced Study (Bucharest) has run several fellowship programs with a special regional focus on the Black Sea area and the post-Soviet space. Supporting young and talented researchers from (South-)East European countries and bringing them together in Bucharest is an attempt to contribute to the European Neighbourhood Policy.

TANDEM is a program that was set up in 2023 with the aim to create bridges between societies and cultures which are close but often know startlingly little about each other. It is specifically dedicated to *literati* i.e. writers and translators from the cultures and countries around the Black Sea, while Tandem translations are intended to strengthen neighbourhood on the edges of Europe by deepening mutual knowledge and understanding.

Authors and translators have the opportunity to work together during a residency at New Europe College in Bucharest. Rather than working in isolation, they are encouraged to become part of the international interdisciplinary community of researchers in the humanities and social sciences that NEC has fostered since 1994.

Moreover, TANDEM Fellowships may lead to new projects that the fellows can develop individually or together with other researchers.

Up to now, writers and translators from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania and Ukraine have participated in the project, and their work has so far resulted in several published translations.

Selection Committee

Ulrich Schmid, Professor of East European Studies,
University of St. Gallen

Antje Contius, Director, S. Fischer Stiftung, Berlin

Ioana Pârvulescu, Writer; Professor of Modern
Literature, University of Bucharest

Katharina Biegger, Strategic Advisor, Center for
Governance and Culture in Europe, University of
St. Gallen

Valentina Sandu-Dediu, Rector, New Europe
College; Professor of Musicology, National
University of Music, Bucharest

3 years

11 literary works

22 fellows



1st year



Photo:
Maria Rybakova (author) and Marina Vraciu (translator)
Tandem Seminar on 5 July 2023



Maria Rybakova
(Russia)

Tandem Fellow, Author,
Assistant Professor
of Literature,
Nazarbayev University,
Kazakhstan

June–July 2023

Translating Maria Rybakova's "Quaternity: Four Novellas from the Carpathians" from Russian into Romanian

A collection of four novellas published in September 2021. Four thematically linked novellas that focus on obsessive relationships, stolen identities, and illusions of grandeur in the post-1989 Carpathian-Balkan region: An American expat in Europe appropriates the identity of a Romanian orphan in her desperate search for love.



Marina Vraciu
(Romania)

Tandem Fellow, Translator,
Associate Professor,
"Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
University,
Iasi

June–July 2023

A dictator's daughter learns, while on a study trip to France, that her parents have been overthrown and are about to be executed. A minor character from a novel confronts her own insignificance. A wife announces to her husband of forty years that she's just been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.



Susanna Harutyunyan
(Armenia)

Tandem Fellow, Author

September–November 2023

Translating Susanna Harutyunyan's "Ravens before Noah" from Armenian into Turkish

"Ravens before Noah" is a celebrated Armenian novel, first published in 2015 and republished in 2019. It received the Presidential Prize for Literature in Armenia for its profound portrayal of survival, trauma, and human resilience. Set in a remote Armenian mountain village around the mid-20th century, the novel follows refugees who fled the Hamidian massacres of 1894.



Ani Sarukhanyan
(Armenia)

Tandem Fellow, Translator,
(former) Lecturer,
Department of
Armenian Language
and Culture,
Ankara University

September–November 2023

They live modest, superstitious lives under the watchful eye of Harout, a figure who serves as both protector and enforcer. Despite their isolation, they are haunted by constant fears—of discovery, of returning violence, and of one another. Given its exploration of Armenian-Turkish history and the shared traumas of both peoples, the translation would deepen cultural understanding and foster dialogue between the two nations.



Cătălin Pavel
(Romania)

Tandem Fellow, Author,
Assistant Professor of
Archaeology,
"Ovidius"
University,
Constanța

October–November 2023

Translating Cătălin Pavel's "The Animals that Made us Human. Fur, Tails, and Feathers in Archaeology" from Romanian into Turkish

Cătălin Pavel's "The Animals that Made us Human. Fur, Tails, and Feathers in archaeology" (Humanitas, 2021) is a non-fiction volume of archaeology/history that bridges the gap between academia and the general public. Born out of a science communication project, it retains a substantial bibliography, but no footnotes.



Metin Omer
(Romania)

Tandem Fellow, Translator,
Lecturer,
"Ovidius"
University,
Constanța

October–November 2023

In it, Pavel investigated the way humans interacted with animals – chapters on dogs, cats, horses, but also whales, hedgehogs, birds, and bears – throughout prehistory and the Classical Antiquity. Pavel set off to study, with archaeological methods, the interaction between human persons and non-human persons, and to prove that animals have been a major catalyst of our cognitive and emotional development.



Photo:
Metin Omer (translator) and Cătălin Pavel (author)
Tandem Seminar on 8 May 2024



Photo:
Susanna Harutyunyan (author) and Ani Sarukhanyan (translator)
Tandem Seminar on 8 November 2023

2nd year

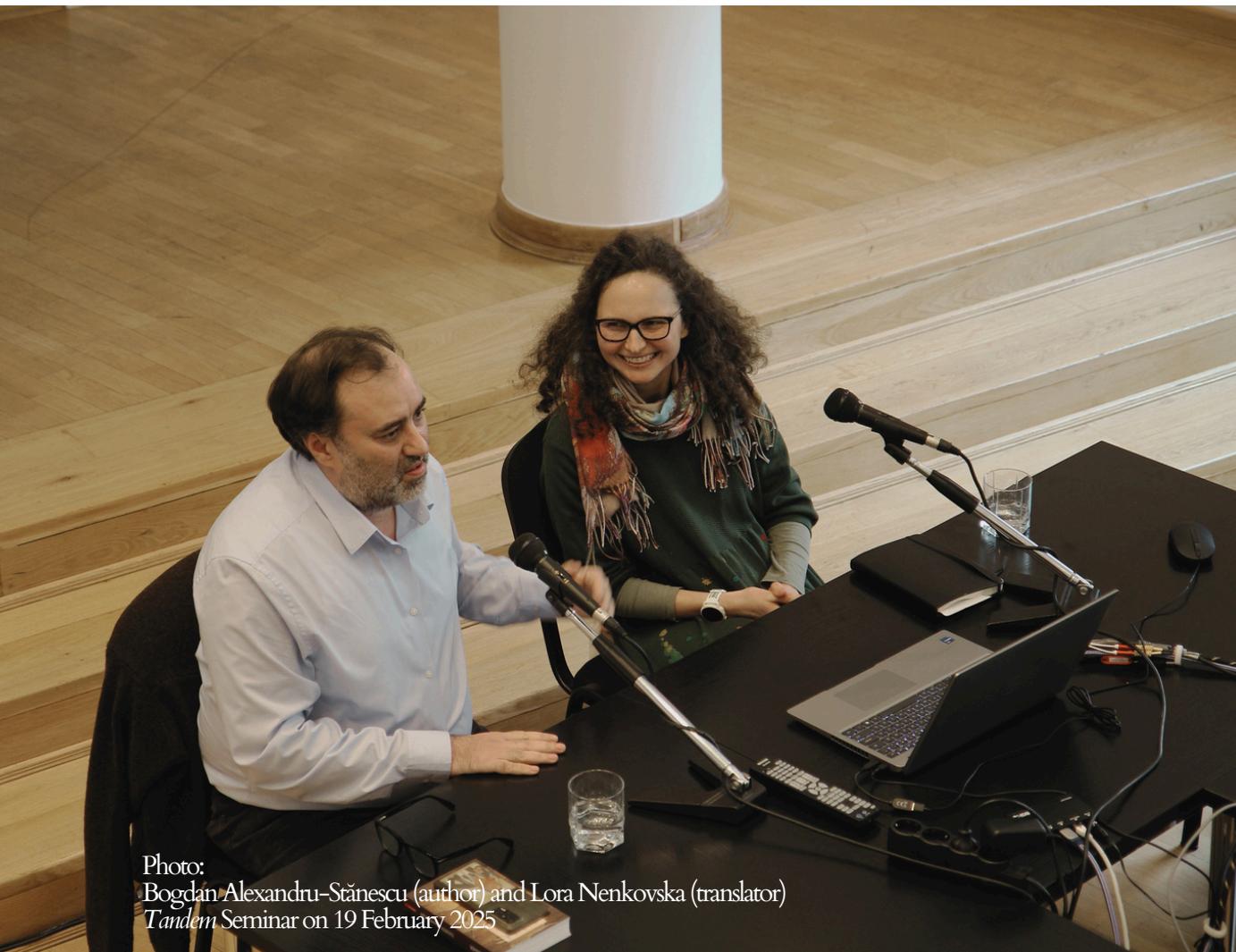


Photo:
Bogdan Alexandru-Stănescu (author) and Lora Nenkovska (translator)
Tandem Seminar on 19 February 2025



Bogdan-Alexandru
Stănescu
(Romania)
Tandem Fellow, Author;
Editorial Director,
Pandora M Publishing House,
Bucharest

January–February 2025

*Translating Bogdan-
Alexandru Stănescu's
“Abraxas” from
Romanian into Bulgarian*

“Abraxas”, published in 2022 by Polirom, follows Michi Lucescu, nicknamed Chiț-Chiț, a man shaped by the apocalyptic tensions of a fractured family. Caught between his artistic but volatile mother, a painter, and his strict, adventurous father, Michi withdraws from the world, retreating to the attic of an old Bucharest house.



Lora Nenkovska
(Bulgaria)
Tandem Fellow, Translator;
Assistant Professor,
Sofia University

January–February 2025

Through dreamlike recollections, Michi wanders the “apartment building of memory,” opening the doors to eleven symbolic rooms that reveal lives of failure, longing, and self-destruction. His journey crosses time and space—from the Vienna of Jacob Levi Moreno to the Paris of Ilarie Voronca and the New York of Delmore Schwartz. Blending darkness and illumination, *Abraxas* becomes a dazzling shadow play—both intimate and philosophical—where literature itself emerges as a force of redemption.



Liliana Corobca
(Romania)

Tandem Fellow, Author
Researcher,
Institute for Investigation
of Communist Crimes
and the Memory
of the Romanian Exile,
Bucharest

October–November 2024

*Translating Liliana
Corobca’s “Kinderland”
from Romanian into
Azerbaijani*

“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
the two younger
brothers.



Jale Ismayil
(Azerbaijan)

Tandem Fellow, Translator

October–November 2024

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.
Translated into
Azerbaijani, it would be
the first contemporary
Romanian and
Moldovan novel
proposed to Azerbaijani
readers after the fall of
communism.



Kato Javakhishvili
(Georgia)

Tandem Fellow, Author

October–November 2024

*Translating Kato
Javakhishvili’s “With Love,
Elli” from Georgian into
Ukrainian*

Kato Javakhishvili’s
children’s book tells the
touching story of a
young girl whose father
works at the “Boredom
Committee,” a job that
consumes all his time
and leaves little space for
his daughter. The girl
deeply misses her
mother, who passed
away in an accident,
though she has been
told that her mother is
simply away on a
business trip. This
hidden truth and her
father’s emotional
distance create a sense of
loneliness and confusion
in her world.



Serhiy Lazo
(Ukraine)

Tandem Fellow, Translator

October–November 2024

Everything changes,
however, when the girl
invents an imaginary
friend named Ellie — a
lively, red-haired girl
who wears a hat topped
with a large white
pompom. Ellie becomes
her companion, guiding
her through an
imaginative and
emotional journey that
helps her rediscover joy,
connection, and
meaning.
Beyond its story, “With
Love, Ellie” carries an
important message
about emotional
honesty and connection.
It explores how children
who are deceived or
neglected may lose trust
in the world and
become isolated.



Tatev Chakhian
(Armenia)

Tandem Fellow, Author

June–July 2025

*Translating Tatev
Chakhian’s poetry
collection “Migrant Point”
from Armenian into
Georgian*

“Migrant Point” (Actual
Art, Yerevan, 2024), the
second poetry collection
by Tatev Chakhian,
offers a compelling
exploration of the
intricate layers of
migrant experience.
With 26 poems,
Chakhian delves into
the themes of migration,
belonging, and the
lasting impact of war
and displacement on
diasporic narratives.
Drawing from her own
experiences as a migrant,



Asya Darbinyan
(Armenia)

Tandem Fellow, Translator

June–July 2025

Chakhian navigates the
complexities of identity,
language, and memory,
with depth and
sensitivity, capturing the
struggle of negotiating
hyphenated identities
and the profound sense
of alienation within
familial bonds.

Each poem in “Migrant
Point” provides an
introspective look into
the resilience required to
navigate the challenges
of displacement, inviting
readers to delve into the
core of the migrant
experience with
thought-provoking
insight.



Photo:
Tatev Chakhyan (author) and Asya Darbinyan (translator)
Tandem Seminar on 25 June 2025



Photo:
Kato Javakhishvili (author) and Serhiy Lazo (translator)
Tandem Seminar on 6 November 2024

3rd year



Photo: Maria Andrei (translator) and Theodora Dimova (author) Tandem Seminar on 22 October 2025



Maria Andrei
(Romania)
Tandem Fellow, Translator

October–November 2025

Translating Theodora Dimova's novel "Adriana" from Bulgarian into Romanian

Maria Andrei first encountered the work of Dimitar Dimov as a student, captivated by his novels. Years later, she discovered his daughter, Theodora Dimova, an acclaimed contemporary Bulgarian author who has enriched Bulgarian literature through her own plays, novels, and essays. The novel "Adriana" – which takes as its starting point Dimitar Dimov's last unfinished work, "Untitled Novel" – piqued her interest.



Theodora Dimova
(Bulgaria)
Tandem Fellow, Author

October–November 2025

After discovering her father's unfinished manuscript, "Untitled Novel", Theodora Dimova was inspired by its enigmatic heroine Adriana. Imagining the life Adriana might have lived through three major eras of Bulgarian history, Dimova felt compelled to give her a voice. Dimova explains: "I could hear her voice, I could hear her stories from three eras, she was telling me about the vicissitudes of her fate, about her sins, she was confessing to me! I must write it all down, I said to myself, I owe it to her."



Dan Coman
(Romania)
Tandem Fellow, Author

October–November 2025

Translating Dan Coman's collection of short stories "Ce preferi?" (What do you prefer?) from Romanian into Bulgarian

"Ce preferi?" (What do you prefer?) is a collection of short stories published by Polirom in 2022–18 stories about the fragility of existence, which can be overwhelming for anyone, regardless of circumstances or social status. It is a book about how a family handles moments of crisis: through overprotection or neglect? What brings two people together: physical attraction or affinities?



Stilyan Deyanov
(Bulgaria)
Tandem Fellow, Translator

October–November 2025

What happens when communication becomes more of an obstacle than a bridge? And above all, can the body offer solutions? Instinct, vulnerability, and desire may join forces with reason, but nothing guarantees inner peace. Sensual, melancholic, always on the border between overwhelming sensitivity and illusory lucidity, the stories in "Ce preferi?" explore the limits of lives that are constantly dependent on an "other," whether present or absent.



Tea Topuria
(Georgia)
Tandem Fellow, Author

October–November 2025

Translating Tea Topuria's novel "Near the Jacob's Well" from Georgian into Ukrainian

"Near the Jacob's Well" is a novel about an ethnic group, a people, human beings, and the real or imaginary dimensions in which a person can exist. The book is written in the genre of magical realism. It does not have a single main character. Its characters are different parts of one whole, each with their unique stories and most sacred feelings. Why does a person come into this world?



Nataliia Trokhym
(Ukraine)
Tandem Fellow, Translator

October–November 2025

What is their burden or experience as an individual? How does each person search for their path—up to death and even beyond it—since in this novel, some remain alive even after death? The story takes place in an imaginary country and an invented time. The book tells the story of a small nation that, after an invasion by conquerors, is split in two: those who are exiled to another place and those who remain in their homeland. The divided population becomes estranged from one another, forgetting each other.



Arsen Arzumanyan
(Armenia)
Tandem Fellow, Translator

January–February 2026

Translating Lavinia Braniste's novel "Interior Zero" from Romanian into Armenian

"Interior Zero" by Lavinia Braniste offers a raw and authentic portrayal of young women navigating the complexities of modern urban life, capturing their internal and external struggles without embellishment. Cristina is 30 and works in a toxic environment in a construction company, with an impulsive boss and colleagues with whom she has nothing in common.



Lavinia Braniste
(Romania)
Tandem Fellow, Author

January–February 2026

This novel, published by Polirom in 2016, was translated into German, Spanish and Polish, and adapted for stage both in Romania and Germany. The film by Eugen Jebeleanu based on the book will be released this year. Translating this novel into Armenian would provide readers access to a narrative that resonates universally, yet is deeply rooted in Romanian society.

11 literary works

7 novels

2 collections of short stories

1 collection of poems

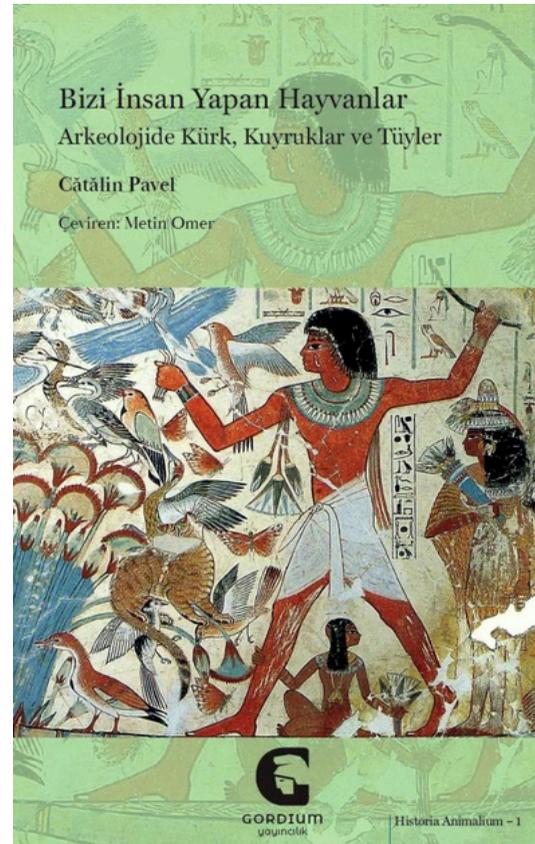
1 children's book

Author & title in English	Original language	Target language
Maria Rybakova, "Quaternity: Four Novellas from the Carpathians"	Russian	Romanian
Susanna Harutyunyan, "Ravens before Noah"	Armenian	Turkish
Cătălin Pavel, "The Animals that Made us Human. Fur, Tails, and Feathers in Archaeology"	Romanian	Turkish
Bogdan-Alexandru Stănescu, "Abraxas"	Romanian	Bulgarian
Liliana Corobca, "Kinderland"	Romanian	Azerbaijani
Kato Javakhishvili, "With Love, Elli"	Georgian	Ukrainian
Tatev Chakhian, "Migrant Point"	Armenian	Georgian
Theodora Dimova, "Adriana"	Bulgarian	Romanian
Lavinia Branîște, "Interior Zero"	Romanian	Armenian
Dan Coman, "What do you prefer?"	Romanian	Bulgarian
Tea Topuria, "Near the Jacob's Well"	Georgian	Ukrainian

Recent publications

Kato Javakhishvili, “With love, Elli”

original language (Georgian): სიყვარულით, ელი
target language (Ukrainian): З любов'ю, Еллі (published in July 2025)



Cătălin Pavel, “The Animals that Made us Human. Fur, Tails, and Feathers in Archaeology”

original language (Romanian): Animalele care ne fac oameni. Blană, cozi și pene în arheologie
target language (Turkish): Bizi insan yapan hayvanlar. Arkeolojide kürk, kuyruk ve tüyler (published in October 2025)



Photo: Dan Coman and Stilyan Deyanov at FILIT Iași on 24 October 2025
(source: Facebook FILIT)



Tandem Team, special panel at FILIT Iași, 2025

For the first time, the TANDEM program has been a guest of FILIT (the International Festival of Literature and Translations). Organised by the National Museum of Literature in Iași on 23–26 October 2025, the event brings together every year hundreds of writers, translators, literary critics, publishers and librarians from Romania and abroad.

The Tandem participation in FILIT was meant to enhance the visibility of the program, highlight the need to forge deeper cooperation among literati in the Black Sea region and create opportunities for publication of the translations resulted from the programme. Last but not least, we also aimed to raise the public's awareness of quality writing in the Black Sea region.

Former and current Tandem fellows Marina Vraciu, Dan Coman, Stilyan Deyanov, Teodora Dimova, Tea Topuria and Nataliia Trokhym participated in a FILIT discussion on 24 October, moderated by Program Coordinator Mihaela Danga. At the event, the fellows had the privilege to present the programme, the progress on their work, and to talk about the complexities and subtleties of the translation process in front of an audience which included academics, students and translators. The round table was organised in partnership with New Europe College.

The Tandem fellows' attendance at FILIT enabled them to network with a wide range of professionals in the book industry and to enjoy full immersion in the cultural and literary environment promoted by this major event.

Fellows' reflections

“

Marina Vraciu and I had ample opportunities to discuss the intricacies of the translation from one language into the other. Our stay in the historical part of Bucharest (that figures in the book) played an immensely important role in facilitating understanding of the setting and the translation of this setting into another language. Marina and I undertook many walks in the evening, and I was able to show her the settings of various scenes from my stories.

Maria Rybakova

The chance to meet Maria Rybakova again, after having worked with her on two other books written by her has been a most welcome opportunity. (...) Talking to author has given me a rare opportunity to understand some facts from 'the laboratory of creation'.

Marina Vraciu

(...) There is another aspect of Lora's staying in Bucharest for two months: the vernacular Romanian. Abraxas is both visual and auditive: I often use spoken language, but more often I use argotic Romanian and I think it was the perfect opportunity for Lora to listen to those different styles in the street, to have direct contact with the demotic Romanian.

Bogdan-Alexandru Stănescu

*I tried to familiarize myself with the author's unique style. (...) The text is scientific with literary valences. He respects academic rigor and at the same time tells a story (or several). In other words, it is an archeology treatise and also a volume like *One Thousand and One Nights* (with animals, instead of caliphs, odalisques and seraioglios).*

Metin Omer

Beyond the translation issues, the time I spent with the prominent Armenian writer Susanna Harutyunyan, and our lengthy conversations became a priceless education and experience for me in terms of literature and life perspectives.

Ani Sarukhanyan

”

Connect with us

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