

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



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

January-February 2025

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.

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.

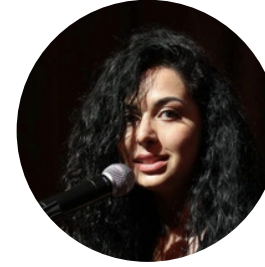


Serhiy Lazo  
(Ukraine)

*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

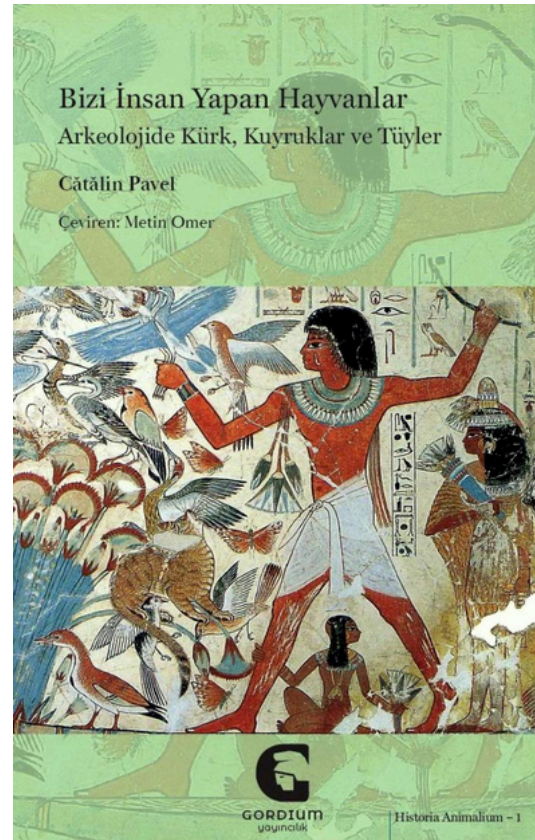
Author & title in English	Original language	Target language
Maria Rybakova, "Quaternity: Four Novellas from the Carpathians"	Russian	Romanian
Susanna Harutyunyan, "Ravens before Noah"	Armenian	Turkish
Cătălin Pavel, "The Animals that Made us Human. Fur, Tails, and Feathers in Archaeology"	Romanian	Turkish
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. Blănă, 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*

*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*

*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 seraiglios).*

*Metin Omer*

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Connect with us

New Europe College  
Plantelor 21, 023971 Bucharest, Romania  
Tel: +4 (021) 307 99 10  
Email: [nec@nec.ro](mailto:nec@nec.ro)  
[www.nec.ro](http://www.nec.ro)



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