

“GROUP PORTRAIT WITH LADY:” FROM FICTION, THROUGH BOOKS, TO REALITY

Paying tribute to my professor is undoubtedly a challenge. The right style, either the formal approach or the wellspring of memories, is actually a state of mind. I chose without hesitation the recollection of a fine collaboration because it is a safe path to evoke a personality. This approach is obviously subjective, but it represents somehow a test of my gratitude. I will not fail.

Professor Doina Negomireanu graduated from the Faculty of Philology of the “Babeş-Bolyai” University in Cluj-Napoca, and she was a scientific researcher at the

Institute of Linguistics and

Literary History, the Cluj branch of the Romanian Academy. She later worked at the University of Craiova,

where she held, since 2004, the Full Professor rank. She specialized in Romanian literary language, with a core

competence in semantics and stylistics. Her scientific works are

extensive and various, with special reference to the books published

by the Academy Publishing House: *Dictionary of The*

Romanian Language, a monumental work (coauthor, 4 volumes, published in 1969, 1975, 1982, 1983), *The Slavic-*

Romanian Evangel from Sibiu, 1551-1553 (philological edition, 1971), *The Correct Romanian Language* (1973),

The Bibliography of Dacoromania

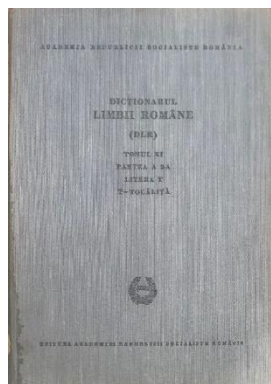
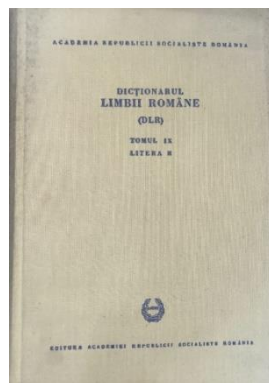
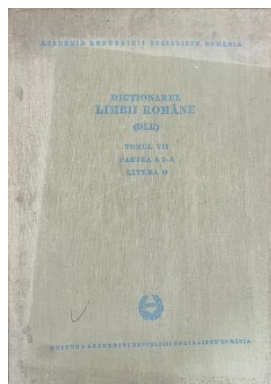
(1983), *Romanian Vocabulary. To Think. A Lexical-Semantic Field* (scholarly monograph, 2000), etc. She also

coordinated several volumes and published dozens of scientific papers (on semantics, stylistics, phonetics,

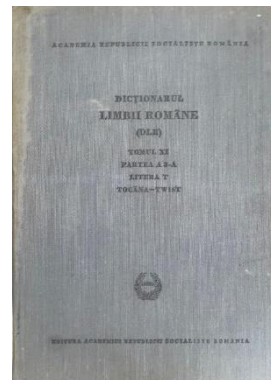
orthography, orthoepy, word formation, and etymology).

I met Professor Negomireanu when I was a high-school student. One day, our class master, Dumitru

Răducanu, told us that an university professor was to teach us a Romanian language course. Indeed, it was a lecture on



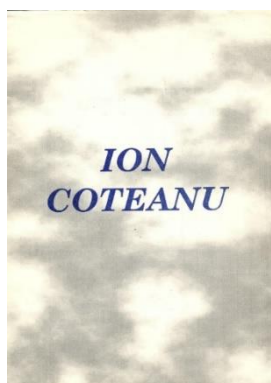
Tudor Arghezi’s poetic language. Professor Negomireanu explained patiently to us many linguistic concepts and an advanced method of text analysis. She spoke for an hour in a constant verbal flow, while grasping an Arghezi scientific edition: the G. Pienescu edition, published in 1980 by the Romanian Book Publishing House. I recall this petty detail because of the colour of the book cover. Come to think of it, I guess I was impressed.



A few years later, I became her student at the University of Craiova. Professor Negomireanu taught phonetics-phonology, lexicology, and history of the Romanian literary language. She was the most beloved teacher, and her classes were a delight: she always spoke offhand (sometimes she had a sort of overwritten memo), and the scientific discourse was somehow extempore, promoting constantly original ideas. As a teaching method, she maintained a ruthless dialogue: she would subject you to a “burst” of questions in order to elicit the right answer.



In my first year at university, I took part in a national scientific competition. Unfortunately, none of my group, coordinated by Professor



Negomireanu, got a leading place. She had taken special care of us: extra hours of training, patience, and lots of books. After the competition, because we were very sad, she gave comfort to us. She publicly announced that we would receive the highest mark in the final year exam as a form of acknowledgement of our effort. She praised us, and was sympathetic to us in spite of this deluding failure, adding that scientific success meant continuous work, not a random outcome. Then she made a surprising gesture, giving each of us a copy of Heinrich Böll’s masterpiece, *Group Portrait with Lady*. The main character of the novel is Leni Pfeiffer, a resolute and intelligent woman. The title of the book and the female character are either a superb coincidence or a subtle message that I did not understand at that time. I still don’t know. Back then, we sat for a “group photo,” a group portrait with our mentor.



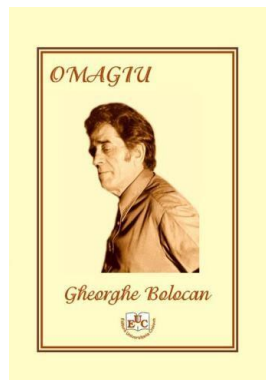
Professor Negomireanu is an energetic and a complex personality. Having been by her side for so many years, I can

say that she always mastered the audience. The scientific proficiency, her calm and confident voice, the quality of speech, and the self-control were essential. Her imposing appearance accomplishes this portrait: she is a distinguished and a very beautiful lady. With all due respect, she was famous for her beauty, and everyone, both men and women, colleagues and students, publicly remarked her glamour and style.

She used to give me “bibliographical” surprises. The list of books is long, but I recall with joy a special gift: Carmen Vlad’s book, *The Meaning, An Essential Dimension of Text*, with a personal dedication. The dedication reads: “To Mr. Dragoș Topală, this ‘sign’ which is intended to be auspicious for the future scientific evolution of the young teacher. With kind regards, Carmen Vlad. Cluj-Napoca, Oct. 27th, 1994.”

Sometimes I was a little impetuous in our professional relationship, and she will certainly understand how sorry I am now. After a harsh contradiction on a scientific topic (at that time I used to have a sort of all-knowing impertinence), Professor Negomireanu “punished” me: one day, she gave me the Ion Coteanu memorial volume that she had painstakingly produced.

In the end, I add the thought of my colleague Ovidiu Drăghici (who also has good reasons to be grateful): Professor Negomireanu, your assistants wish you good health and heartily congratulate you on your lifetime academic carrier!



Dragoș Vlad Topală