

In memoriam Nicolae Felecan (1941–2020)

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At the end of November, professor Nicolae Felecan, one of the most important Romanian linguists, left behind the tumult of this world and joined the other huge personalities who have already passed into the realm of shadows.

Grieved by his suffering and hoping that this terrible ordeal is just another challenge that professor Nicolae Felecan will successfully overcome, the academic environment of Baia Mare faced a painful reality: the premature extinction of a torch that had enlightened, in this corner of the country, generations of students and pupils, contributing to the training of many philologists.

Born in a village called Caila (Bistrița-Năsăud county) on the 24th of August, 1941, Nicolae Felecan attended the Faculty of Romance, Classical and Oriental Languages within the University of Bucharest, being guided by exceptional mentors: G. Călinescu, Al. Graur, Iorgu Iordan, Tudor Vianu and others, who became a standard of professional value and thoroughness for him.

His didactic activity, carried out over several decades mostly within the North University of Baia Mare, began in 1964. There were two periods of interruption: between 1978 and 1979, when he taught Romanian at Aarhus University, Denmark, and then from 1984 to 1993, when he was a teacher at the Industrial High School No. 9, Baia Mare, an institution which became “Mihai Eminescu” High School of Philology as a result of Mr. Felecan’s efforts. The institution was under his management as headmaster for three years (after the Revolution).

Meanwhile, professor Nicolae Felecan initiated the National Latin Language Olympiad (the first edition was in 1988). His students obtained the first places in the country and took part in the “Ciceronianum” International Contest (Arpino, Italy).



The professor ascended step by step in the university hierarchy, being a university assistant (1964–1966), a teaching assistant (1966–1972), a lecturer (1972–1984), an associate professor (1993–1999), a professor (since 1999). The organizational skills and the managerial capacity represented another important coordinate of his personality, because over the years Nicolae Felecan was also head of department, dean, and vice-rector. Thus, he fulfilled a wish of his soul: the separation of the Faculty

of Letters from the Faculty of Sciences, developing it by establishing several specialisations, on both undergraduate and graduate level, as well as doctoral studies.

His research activity is extensive, including the study of language by taking into account almost all its compartments: history of the Romanian language, lexicology, lexicography, grammar, semantics, dialectology, orthography, toponymy, anthroponymy, etymology, terminology, journalism, and the study of romance languages. Member of several scientific organizations (The Society of Philological Sciences in Romania, The Society of Classical Studies, Société de linguistique romane, The Romanian Society of Dialectology), professor Nicolae Felecan wrote numerous studies and articles published in prestigious journals, proving his extraordinary work capacity, as

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well as the diversity of approaches. All his writings emphasize his concern for scientific accuracy and his aspiration for excellence.

The value of his doctoral thesis *Sistemul lexico-semantic al termenilor ce denumesc părțile corpului uman în limba română* [The lexical-semantic system of terms designating parts of the human body in Romanian], elaborated under the guidance of professor docent B. Kelemen, was validated by the reports of some exceptional reviewers, among which we mention academician Al. Graur. It was later published with other university courses and books of indisputable scientific value: *Graiul, etnografia și folclorul zonei Chioar* [The subdialect, ethnography and folklore of the Chioar region] (in collaboration with several authors), 1983, Baia Mare (this book received the “Timotei Cipariu” award from the Romanian Academy); *Paronimia în limba română* [Paronymy in Romanian], 1993, Baia Mare: Gutinul; *Probleme de vocabular și de exprimare corectă* [Issues concerning vocabulary and proper language use], 1999, Bucharest: Vox (work awarded by the Writers’ Union, Baia Mare, 2000); *Sintaxa limbii române. Teorie. Sistem. Construcție* [The syntax of the Romanian language. Theory. System. Construction], 2002, Cluj-Napoca: Dacia (work awarded by the Writers’ Union, Baia Mare, 2003); *Vocabularul limbii române* [The vocabulary of the Romanian language], 2004, Cluj-Napoca: Mega, Cluj University Press; *Între lingvistică și filologie* [Between linguistics and philology], 2011, Cluj-Napoca: Mega; *Lingvistică și filologie română* [Romanian Linguistics and Philology], 2020, Cluj-Napoca: Mega. He elaborated dictionaries, study guides for the Latin language, collections of annotated Latin expressions and quotes. All the aforementioned works were used by students and teachers, becoming indisputable milestones in the organization of teaching activities, both in universities and schools.

Every participation in national and international conferences, where he held communications, proved his openness to new experiences and the zeal to collaborate or to exchange ideas with numerous personalities in the field of research. The simple inventory of all the writings involves a thorough work, so the articles themselves are even more impressive, proving the effort and the involvement of the researcher, who presented his scientific opinions

at conferences in the Netherlands, Denmark, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Belgium, Spain, Austria, Canada, and Moldova.

The onomastics center within the University of Baia Mare had in the person of Nicolae Felecan an authentic researcher. His articles and studies focused on the sociolinguistic aspects of onomastics and stood out due to the precision of the presentation and the accuracy of the scientific approach: *Categoriile antroponimice: nume, supranume, poreclă* [Anthroponymic categories: name, byname, nickname], *Onomasticon. Studii despre nume și numire* I, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2010, p. 81–120; *Considerații asupra oikonimelor Caila și Purcăreț* [Considerations on the oikonyms Caila and Purcăreț] (co-authored with Oliviu Felecan), in *Studia linguistica et Philologica. Omagiu Profesorului Nicolae Saramandu*, University of Bucharest Publishing House, 2011, p. 331–336; *The Dynamics of Forenames in the Anthroponymy of Baia Mare*, in *Name and Naming: Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012, p. 118–128; *Cultural and linguistic layers embedded in Romanian oikonyms derived from hagionyms* (in collaboration with Oliviu Felecan), in “Onoma”, 48/2013, p. 89–107; *Onomastica în spațiul actual* [Onomastics in contemporary space], in “Limba română”, XXIII (7–8), 2013; *Nicknames or Collective Bynames?*, in *Unconventional Anthroponyms: Formation Patterns and Discursive Function*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014, p. 122–132; *Straturi etimologice reflectate în hidronimia românească* [Etymological layers embedded in Romanian hydronymy] (co-authored with Oliviu Felecan), in “Toponimia Românică, Qaderns de filologia studis lingüitics”, XX, 2015, p. 251–270; *Transylvanian Oikonyms between Sacred and Profane. Etymological Hypotheses and Onomasiological Framework*, in *Onomastics Between Sacred and Profane*, Vernon Press, 2019; *Toponymic Homonymies and Metonymies: Names of Rivers vs Names of Settlements* (co-authored with Oliviu Felecan), in “Onomastica. Anuari of the Societat d’Onomastica”, no. 5/2019, p. 91–114 etc.

His merits have been recognized and the importance of his activity in the extended field of philology has been emphasized by the books dedicated to him (*Confluente lingvistice și filologice* [Linguistic and philological confluences], Oliviu Felecan, Daiana Felecan (coordinators), Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2011;

Magistri et alumni, amore scribendi. Studia. In Honorem Professoris Nicolae Felecan, Oliviu Felecan, Daiana Felecan (coordinators), Cluj-Napoca: Mega, Argonaut, 2016).

All the achievements aforementioned are signs of the professor's passage through this world, as he laid a brick in the foundation of each of his former

students. They are also testimonies reminding us from now on that the man who warmly and gently smiled behind his glasses, that the teacher who was able to talk to us about a lexeme or a theory for hours, found peace by going to talk to the angels about the secrets of vocabulary and syntax in order to protect them from flaws...