

**THE DESTINY OF THE LATIN WORDS INHERITED INTO THE ROMANIAN
LANGUAGE – WITH A FOCUS ON THE NAMES OF COLOURS**

(Summary)

The Latin origin of the Romanian language is the starting point in determining the etymology of certain words belonging to the Romanian lexicon. This work is an overall study of chromatic terms – mainly those inherited from Latin, but also of other names of colours: archaisms, regionalisms, neologisms, calques.

The presentation of the language facts was done both in diachrony and in synchrony. Our attention was drawn by different linguistic aspects, connected to the morphology, orthography or stylistic character of the chromatic terms. In the linguistic analysis and interpretation we have taken into account the information known at present date from the works of researchers who studied and interpreted the phenomenon of colour. In the chapter regarding the current stage of research (with a focus on the names of colours) we have highlighted the contribution of Romanian researchers to this theme (Lazăr Şăineanu, Sextil Puşcariu, Simion Florea Marian, George Coşbuc, Ana Canarache, Rodica Marcu, Gavril Istrate, George Giuglea, Béla Kelemen, Domnica Gheorghiu, Fulvia Ciobanu, Dan Mihăilescu, Mihai Golu, Aurel Dicu, Florica Dimitrescu, Angela Bidu-Vrănceanu, Ion Toma, Marius Sala, Grigore Brâncuş, Liviu Lăzărescu) and also of the foreign ones (Andres M. Kristol, Maria Grossmann).

At the same time, we considered rather limited the data provided by the lexical material of the *Dictionary of Chromatic Terms*, put together by Eugen Bulai, which were the starting point of the semantic analysis, and also a landmark in our research, to which we have always related.

From the strictly theoretical point of view, our contribution to the research of this phenomenon, manifests itself in two forms: 1) by approaches from new perspectives – the chapters of presentation of the current stage of research on the chromatic terms, the presentation of the semantic evolution of the main Romanian names of colours, of their role in the Romanian culture and civilisation, by comparison, relation and referral to other cultures and civilisations (both European and Asian), as we could not ignore many similarities with other languages (Romanic

and non-Romanic); 2) by the analysis and interpretation of the facts itemized or mentioned, but insufficiently researched in the theme's bibliography, and also by the definition of some syntagms which contain chromatic terms, recently created, but nonexistent in the Romanian dictionaries: săgeata *albastră* (*blue* arrow), pastila *albastră* (*blue* pill), tableta *portocalie* (*orange* tablet).

The premise we started from is that the main Romanian chromatic terms belong to the fundamental vocabulary, as they are integrated in lexical and semantic fields and sub-fields. Thus, the terms studied (integrated in the lexical-semantic field of names of colours) were analysed from different points of view; for each researched aspect we selected various examples.

The study undertaken was carried out in accordance with the research methods which allowed the comparison of the semantics of Latin chromatic terms with the semantics of the Romanian ones, in order to determine their evolution. One of the methods, of semantic fields, is important for the description of the historical evolution of the vocabulary, as the semantic fields are a reality, they exist in any language, and, due to this fact, they become a starting point for research.

The names of the seven colours which are the study material of this dissertation are those the Romanian language inherited from Latin: *alb*, *negru*, *roșu*, *galben*, *albastru*, *verde*, *vânăț* (*white*, *black*, *red*, *yellow*, *blue*, *green*, *purple*) – some of them being common with the spectrum of visible light.

The chromatic terminology of Romanic languages is Latin. The terms transmitted to the Romanic languages either kept their exact meaning (Lat. *VIRIDIS* > Rom. *verde*, Fr. *vert*, It. *verde*), or they have a rather different meaning (Lat. *GALBINUS* "light green" > Fr. *jaune*, It. *giallo*, Rom. *galben*).

The presentation of the semantic evolution of the Romanian chromatic terms starts from the definition of the term *colour*, and the idea which results from our work is that the chromatic adjectival semantics is extended. We can thus speak of a general(ized) symbolism of colours, even if each type of culture or civilisation preserves a certain tradition of colour connotation. Besides, there is also an (emblematic) language of colours based on metaphors – thus envy is symbolised by *green*, love by *red*, candour and purity by *white*, jealousy by *yellow*, melancholy by *purple*.

But not only the general symbolism of colours is of interest. Our attention was also drawn by the fact that the terms which denominate colours appear in many contexts, which means that their area of applicability is very wide. By examining the combinatory possibilities, we have attempted to determine the position that term has in the synonymic series it belongs to.

The analysis we performed also took into account the terms expressing chromatic appreciation in a form other than “the characteristics” – we have thus analysed the names of colours turned into nouns, verbs, adverbs and phrases.

The chromatic terms transmitted to all the Romanic languages are: *alb* (*white*) (Lat. *ALBUS* > Fr. *aube*, It., Sp. *alba*), *negru* (*black*) (Lat. *NIGER* > Fr. *noir*, It. *nero*, Sp. *negro*), and *verde* (*green*) (Lat. *VIRIDIS* > Pop. Lat. *VIRDIS* > Fr., Prov. *vert*, It., Sp. *verde*); these names of colours also exist in the three Romanian dialects south of the Danube.

The first two colours we started our analysis from are *alb* (*white*) and *negru* (*black*), as in the paradigms governed by the two chromatic terms, the identities and oppositions are best realized.

To denominate the colour *white*, Romanian maintained the Latin term *ALBUS* (> *alb*). The corresponding term of *ALBUS*, *CANDIDUS*, was not preserved in any Romanic language. In Romanian, however, the term *cărunț* (*grey-haired*) was preserved, from the Latin word *CANUTUS*.

To denominate the colour *black*, the Romanian language inherited *NIGER* (> *negru*). The Romanian language also has other terms, of substratum, to name “black” – *lai*, *barz(ă)*.

To denominate *yellow*, the Romanic languages did not preserve general Latin terms (*FULVUS* or *FLAVUS*), but the term *GALBINUS*, which designated the shade of “light-green”.

Romanian and the central Italian dialects are the only languages which kept *vânăt* (*purple*) (< Lat. *VENETUS*). In Romanian, however, it has a different meaning than the Latin word (where it meant “blue-turquoise”). *Vânăt* is the base for other derived terms (*vânătaie*, (*a*) *învineți*, *vinețiu*, *vinețică*). To name other nuances derived from *vânăt*, the Romanian language borrowed various terms from French (*violet*, *lila*, *mov*), but also created specific terms, parallel with the neologisms of French origin (*vioriu*, *vinețiu*).

From the Latin words designating the colour red, Romanian inherited several terms: *roșu* (*red*) < Lat. *ROSEUS*, *rus* < Lat. *RUSSUS*, *roib* < Lat. *ROBEUS*.

The structure of the chromatic terms is researched from the point of view of contents, but also of form. The syntagms containing names of colours are put together based on relations of: a) subordination (*cartonaș roșu*, *moarte neagră*, *număr verde*); b) coordination (*alb-albaștri*, *alba-neagra*).

The chromatic adjectives are flexible, just like other lexical-grammatical classes. The means of enriching the chromatic terminology are: borrowings and internal procedures of enrichment, specific to every language – derivation, composition, changing the grammatical value. We noticed the relatively high frequency of compounds (*negru-verzui*, *albastru-electric*), but also increasingly precise chromatic derivations (*alb 13*, *alb 42*, *roșu Tițian*).

By intermorphological conversion, chromatic terms gain a new morphosyntactic value: they become nouns, adverbs, even verbs and can thus gain a certain expressivity. By intramorphological conversion (the same part of speech), the names of colours become proper nouns, and, in time, the proper names lose the value of the chromatic term they derive from. The conversion of the adjective into a noun is an inherited procedure (from Latin), as in Latin many adjectives were also used as nouns. In Romanian, this procedure was strengthened by the use of lexical-grammatical calques from other languages (*alb*, with a noun value, in *alb-de-zinc*, from the German *Zinkweiss*). Some chromatic nouns obtained by conversion are specific to the Romanian language, as they are found in certain expressions (*a spune/îndruga verzi si uscate*).

Complex relations develop between the colour names (common names) – anthroponyms – toponyms, demonstrating, once again, the oldness of chromatic terms.

Certain terms, used as reference in denominating colours, give different connotations to chromatic adjectives, more or less intense, depending on the context (*as black as pitch/coal/hell*, *as green as grass/emerald*). From the morphosyntactic point of view, simple chromatic adjectives have the category of intensity (*foarte alb*, *mai roșu*); the compound ones and those formed by derivation do not have degrees of intensity (**mai alb-crem*, **foarte verzișor*).

The stylistic study of chromatic terms allowed us to acknowledge the specialization of the use of colour names in certain language styles: poetic (*dalb, ivoriu, azur*), familiar (*livid, țiğănos, cătrănit, rumen*), technical (*alb-de-fildeș, cinabru*). In contrast with the terms belonging to the literary language, the popular chromatic terms (*turchez, gălbincios, funingiu, cârmâziu*) cannot be neglected.

Nowadays, more and more names of objects develop a secondary meaning, of chromatic appreciation (*smarald, turcoaz, asphalt, sepie*). The same observation is valid both for English and French, which use the names of objects to also express the chromatic meaning. It is obvious that the tendency which manifested itself in Romanian was produced under the influence of other languages (as we already mentioned, of French, English and even Italian).

The representation of cultural specificity is done by phrases which contain chromatic terms. Metaphors and similes which are the basis of phrases use significant elements from the symbolic point of view for the respective ethnos.

In marketing, the use of colour is done for practical and aesthetic reasons, as colours determine the selling of a product, contribute to its individuality, create a company image. The colours of the packaging are important, some of them having the effect of attracting the eye (by creating certain psychic effects at the subconscious level) and, thus, attracting the buyers and others have the contrary effect (the soda *Pepsi blue* was a fiasco because of its colour – the same colour as medicinal spirit).

The contents of the thesis was structured so as to follow not only the semantic evolution of chromatic terms, but also the way in which they are grouped. We emphasized their richness and variety, but our attention was also drawn by the arbitrary character of this level of vocabulary. The continuous adding of terms to the chromatic vocabulary has extra linguistic reasons which are affective, perceptive, but also purely linguistic reasons, of a semantic nature. The Romanian chromatic lexicon was and continues to be enriched with new terms, especially from the Romanic languages – thus strengthening and amplifying the Latin character of the Romanian language.

The lexical-semantic system of names of colours in Romanian is complex, with a large number of terms, this required the creation of paradigms brought together into

a system which is characterized by a relative mobility: this means that, at a certain language system.

moment, some terms can be adopted, included in the system, while others, by neutralization, will be practically excluded from the language.

By studying the destiny of the chromatic terms inherited from Latin we thus confirm the essential role they have within the vocabulary of the Romanian language, their position being a dominant one, proven by the proliferation of large lexical families.

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We have the conviction that every chapter of this dissertation presents the most representative problems, which have a general importance, but an even more detailed analysis, based on literary texts, on the language used in the mass-media, and also on the psycho-social analysis of colours in several fields – advertising, sports, politics, art, medicine, textile industry, fashion, constructions, architecture, would reveal not only new information, but also new terms, because the language is constantly evolving, enriching the studies already existing about chromatic terms.

Even if the theme included only the Romanian chromatic terms inherited from Latin, we could not ignore other Romanian chromatic terms or names of colours in other languages (some of them entered Romanian). Finally, independently of their origin or oldness, they all fit into the chromatic terminology, and thus in the general language system.