CONSIDERATIONS ON THE SEMANTIC EVOLUTION OF THE CHROMATIC TERM *VERDE* IN ROMANIAN

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Abstract

This article aims at presenting an interpretation of the evolution of the chromatic term *verde* (*green*), inherited from Latin, adopting an onomasiological perspective which allows nuanced semantic observations and also implies finding explanations able to help overcoming the difficulties resulted from the attempt of formal and semantic equivalence of the etimons with the terms derived from them. The paper focuses on describing the elements of the lexo-semantic field of the term *verde* (*green*) both synchronically and diachronically to show its continuity from Latin to Romanian and the productivity of various types of derivation and compounding. Cultural specificity is evinced by offering examples of idiomatic expressions which contain this name of colour; the metaphors and comparisons contained in these idiomatic expressions make use of significant symbolic elements specific to the ethnos under discussion.

Key words: *verde* (*green*), *syntagm*, *meaning*, *etymology*, *frequency*

Résumé

Dans cet article nous nous sommes proposé de faire une interprétation de l'évolution du terme chromatique *vedre* (*vert*, *verte*) hérité du latin, ayant comme point de départ une «vision» de type onomasiologique, qui permet de nuancer les observations de nature étymologique et implique la tâche de trouver des explications pour dépasser les inconvénients survenus dans l'essai d'équivalation formelle et sémantique des étymons avec les termes hérités. L'ouvrage est centré sur la description du champ lexico-sémantique du terme *verde* (*vert*, *verte*) autant du point de vue synchronique que diachronique, pour démontrer sa continuité du latin au roumain et la productivité des procédés de composition et de dérivation. La mis en évidence de la spécificité culturelle se fait en recourant aux phraséologismes qui contiennent ce nom de couleur; les métaphores et les comparaisons qui se trouvent à la base des phraséologismes utilisent des éléments significatifs du point de vue symbolique pour l'ethnos respectif.

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Mots-clés: *vedre* (*vert*, *verte*), *phraséologism*, *sens*, *étymologie*, *fréquence*

1. Etymology[1], as a linguistic subbranch[2], subordinate to the domain of semantics, is "the most seductive linguistic"[3] aspect, which studies the evolution of words from the moment they appeared to their latest phase[4]. Synchrony and diachrony in the study of vocabulary do not exclude but complement each other, and "the interest of the linguist as «etymologist» is satisfied when he can establish with certainty the last «stop» in the long

[1] Din definiția dată *etimologiei* de Alberto Zamboni (1988), rezultă că, pentru ca o etimologie să fie corect stabilită, e nevoie ca atât forma, cât și conținutul unui cuvânt să corespundă unei forme și unui conținut din limba presupusă a fi cea din care a fost moștenit cuvântul respectiv. (Apud Sala, 1993, p. 257) /The definition of *etymology* given by Alberto Zamboni (1988) states that the condition for a correct etymology is that both the form and the content of a word should correspond to the form and the content of a word from the language presumed to be the source of inheritance.

[2] "Etimologia nu este nici o disciplină distinctă şi nici o parte a lingvisticii evolutive; este numai o aplicație specială a principiilor referitoare la faptele sincronice şi diacronice. Ea urcă în trecutul cuvintelor, până când găsește ceva care le explică. (...) Prin urmare, etimologia este, înainte de orice, explicarea cuvintelor prin căutarea raporturilor lor cu alte cuvinte. A explica înseamnă: a reda termeni cunoscuți; în lingvistică, *a explica un cuvânt înseamnă a-l reda prin alte cuvinte*, pentru că nu există raporturi necesare între sunet şi sens. (...) Pentru a studia un cuvânt luat ca obiect al cercetării, etimologia își ia elementele de informație, pe rând, din fonetică, morfologie, semantică etc. Pentru a-și atinge scopurile, ea se servește de toate mijloacele pe care lingvistica i le pune la dispoziție, dar nu-și oprește atenția asupra naturii operațiilor pe care e obligată să le facă." (Saussure, 1998, p. 191)/ 'Etymology is neither a distinct discipline nor a part of evolutive linguistics; it is merely a particular type of applying the principles of synchronic and diachronic events. It traces back the past of words until it discovers something which explains them.'/'(...) Therefore, etymology means, first of all, explaining words by finding their relations with other words. To explain means: to render by using familiar terms; in linguistics *to explain a word means to render it by other words* , because there are no necessary relations between the sound and the meaning. (...) To study a word selected for research, etymology gets its information from phonetics, morphology, semantics etc. In order to reach its objectives, etymology makes use of all the means provided by linguistics, but it does not focus its attention on the nature of the operations it has to perform.'

[3] Cf. Dauzat, 1912, p. 279.

[4] "Cercetarea etimologică a cuvintelor se poate limita la indicarea sursei celei mai apropiate în timp a fiecăruia dintre acestea (*etimologie directă*) sau poate urmări firul evoluției până la sursa primară, de obicei reconstruită (*etimologie indirectă*)." (*DŞL*, 2001, p. 203)/ 'Etymological research of words can be limited to indicating the closest source in time for each case (direct etymology) or it can follow the direction of evolution till the primary source, usually reconstructed (indirect etymology).'

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journey"[5] among words[6]. From this point of view, etymology is a means used to organise the lexicon semantically[7].

Lexical unit analysis is comprised in the domain of lexical semantics. But philosophers of language deny the existence of the lexical meaning – "the syntagm *word meaning* is a nonsense, claims Austin (1961), since only an utterance has meaning, a word acquiring its meaning only within a certain utterance"[8]. Nevertheless, "Antiquity scientists believed that the word is the means of getting to the essence of things that is why they looked for the proper meaning of a word, irrespective of their opinion on the appearance of language"[9]. Keeping in mind this statement, we must also mention a fact: the basic (proper) meaning of a word doesn't overlap its contextual meaning[10].

Therefore, to establish the semantic range of a word one must consider its associations (contexts) and also the contextual restrictions imposed on

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[5] Tohăneanu, 1986, p. 172.

6 "Un cuvânt, o particularitate sintactică etc. pot avea, în ce priveşte sensul, două elemente distincte, unul strict intelectual, care este noțiunea pură, reprezentarea obiectului în discuție, altul afectiv, care arată oarecum poziția subiectului, reacția sentimentală a individului vorbitor față de noțiunea respectivă." (Iordan, 1975, p. 12-13)/'A word, a syntactic characteristic, etc. can have semantically two distinct elements, one strictly intellectual, this being the pure notion, the representation of the object under discussion, and the othe affective, showing in a certain way the subject's position, the speaker's emotional reaction towards the notion.'

[7] "Ne întrebăm, din această perspectivă, dacă în contextul actual al cercetărilor de semantică, prin modul de abordare a sensului – așa cum se obișnuiește de la Schuchardt încoace –, etimologia nu riscă o nouă izolare, o anacronicizare. Căci latura semantică a unei etimologii a însemnat şi înseamnă consemnarea, cu mai multă sau mai puțină scrupulozitate, a semnificației (semnificațiilor) asociate unui anumit complex sonor." (Balacciu-Matei, 1986, p. 185)/'From this perspective, we wonder if, considering the present-day context of semantic research – as it has been customary since Schuchardt –, etymology is not at risk to become isolated and anachronic again. The reason is that the semantic aspect of an etymology has meant a more or less scrupulous recording of the signification(s) associated to a certain phonic expression.'

[8] Măgureanu, 1983, p. 437.

[9] Bechet, 2008, p. 136.

[10] "(...) Într-o situație dată, există totdeauna un singur sens, sensul contextual; în contextul său, cuvântului îi corespunde o singură imagine conceptuală." (Bechet, 2008, p. 119)/'(…) In a given situation there is always a single meaning, the contextual meaning; within a certain context, the word has a unique corresponding conceptual image.'

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it[11]. The result is the creation of new words to designate things: "Words are human creations and, as most human creations, have a life of their own; we create them and they create themselves"[12]. Words designate concepts or assign the utterance a certain type of expressivity, by their multiple associations.

Establishing the semantic range of the chromatic terms enherited from Latin implies analysing their meaning both in Romanian and in Latin. Evolving semantically from Latin to Romanian, the terms designating colours got richer by acquiring new meanings[13], which gives balance to the Romanian language system and makes up for the loss resulted from the fact that some chromatic terms were not inherited.

In the introduction to his study, *Études sur les termes de couleurs dans la langue latine*, Jacques André draws our attention to the difficulties arisen in naming colours correctly; some of these difficulties are caused by the nature of the colour or by various ophthalmological diseases (in other words, there are physical and physiological difficulties), some are determined by people's feelings, as a result of a different perception of reality and others are connected to the evolution of the vocabulary[14] or even to the indifference of the speaker[15]. Anyway, Jacques André is an adept of developing colour and chromatic nuance awareness, believing that the first colours perceived by a baby are *yellow* and *red* and the last are *blue* and *violet*[16].

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[11] As a result of analysing and correlating these facts, there is obtained the function of a word within the spiritual history of a people, within the description of an author or institution – „se obține funcția unui cuvânt în istoria spirituală a unui popor, în caracterizarea unui autor sau a unei instituții." (Bechet, 2008, p. 174)

[12] Bechet, 2008, p. 127.

[13] "Când un cuvânt capătă un sens nou, acest sens nu-l înlocuieşte pe cel vechi, ci cele două sensuri coexistă. Acelaşi termen se poate folosi, pe rând, cu sensul propriu şi cel figurat, cu sensul concret şi cu cel abstract." (Bechet, 2008, p. 136)/'When a word acquires a new meaning, the latter does not replace the former, but the two coexist. The same term can be alternatively used with its proper and figurative meaning, concretely and abstractly.'

[14] From the Greek spectrum (as it appears in Homer's works) the terms *verde* and *albastru* are missing. Cf. André, 1949, p. 14.

[15] André, 1949, p. 17.

[16] Idem, *ibidem*, p. 15.

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2. To designate the colour *green* Romans used a multitude of terms which defined a large range of nuances; these terms referred to the 'raw' green of the vegetation, to that of the sea or even of glass. From among these terms we enumerate: *VIRENS, -NTIS* "verdant, green", *VĬRĬDIS* "green, greenish, verdant"; *VITREUS* "greenish, azure (like glass)"; *HERBEUS* "as green as grass", *HERBIDUS* "as green as grass", *HERBACEUS* "like green grass"; *CALLAINUS* "sea-green"; *CŪMĀTILIS* "marine green"; *PRASINUS* "as green as leek"; *MYRTEUS* "green like mirtle".

Of all these terms, only two, *VIRENS* and *VĬRĬDIS*, designated exactly the colour green, the others referred to concrete elements. *VIRENS* and *VĬRĬDIS* are terms derived from the root of the verb *VIREŌ, -ĒRE* "to be green (about plants)"[17]. In Latin, the meaning of *VĬRĬDIS* appears in "distinct conceptual associations"[18], like, for instance, *VĬRĬDIS MONS* "an afforested mountain", *VĬRĬDIS AETAS* "the age of youth", *VĬRĬDIS CASEUS* "fresh cheese", *VĬRĬDIS SONUS* "clear sound", *VĬRĬDIS AEGYPTUS* "the rich Egypt", *VĬRĬDIS DEI* "sea gods", *VĬRĬDIS EDERE* "to eat vegetables", etc.

VITREUS is a term derived from *VITRUM* "glass" and designated the transparent, translucent green.

HERBEUS, *HERBIDUS* and *HERBACEUS* are terms derived from *HERBA, -AE*; and designated "the colour of grass".

PRASINUS, *CALLAINUS* and *CUMATILIS* are terms of Greek origin. *CUMATILIS* (used by Plautus) is derived with the suffix *-TILIS* (following the pattern of *PLŬMĀTILIS*).

PORRACEUS is a derivative of *PORRUM* "leek".

The high frequency of *verde* (*green*) in Romance languages proves the fact that it was often usen in peasants' language[19].

[17] Cf. *DEL*, 1959, p. 739.
[18] See Bechet, 2008, p. 119.
[19] Cf. *DEL*, 1959, p. 739.

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3. The Romanian term *verde* "care are o nuanță particulară, rezultată din îmbinarea galbenului şi a albastrului; care are culoarea frunzelor, a ierbii sau, în general, a vegetației cu clorofilă; una dintre culorile fundamentale ale spectrului solar, situată între galben şi albastru; (învechit şi rar, prin extindere de sens) imatur; care nu a ajuns la maturitate"/'which has a particular shade of colour, resulted form combining yellow and blue; which has the colour of leaves, grass or, in general, chlorophyl vegetation; one of the fundamental colours of the solar spectrum, placed between yellow and blue; (obsolete and rare, by extension of meaning) immature; which is not mature/ripe yet'[20] comes from the clipped form of the Latin *VĬRĬDIS*, *VĬRDIS*. This explains the form of the word in Romance languages: It., Sp., Port. *verde*, Prov., Fr., Cat. *vert*[21]. The word also exists in the three Romanian dialects spoken in the south Danubean area: in aromână *veárde*[22], in meglenoromână *verdi* and in istroromână *verde*.

The terms *verde* and *varză* are related: *varză* is inherited from the Latin *VĬRĬDIA*, and *verde* from *VĬRĬDIS*, the two Latin terms belonging to the same family. "In modern times, the noun *varză*, with the plural *verze*, narrowed its meaning, referring to a particular vegetable called in Transylvania and Moldavia *curechi* < Lat. **coliculus* (cl. Lat. *cauliculus*), diminutive form of the Lat. *caulis* (> Fr. *chou*). In Transylvania, the plural form *verze* also means «brine cabbage»"[23].

The latin term *VIRDIARIA* is inherited by *vărzar*(*e*) "plăcintă umplută cu varză, cu ceapă, mărar, ştir etc."/'pie filled with cabbage, onion, dill, amaranth, etc.', word which is found at dialectal level in Moldavia and Transylvania[24].

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[20] See *DLR*, 2002, p. 334-350.
[21] *REW* 9368a
[22] Cf. Papahagi, 1974, p. 1259.
[23] Sala, *I*, 2006, p. 249.
[24] "Credem că şi *vărzare* (...) este moştenit din lat. *vir*(*i*)*daria*, pl. lui *vir*(*i*)*darium* (cf. Mihăescu *La romanité* 241). Cuvântul s-a păstrat şi în aromână, unde are formele *vărzare*, *virdzare* (v. DDA)." (Loşonți, 2001, p. 174)/'We believe that *vărzare* is also inherited from the Latin *vir*(*i*)*daria*, the plural form of *vir*(*i*)*darium* (cf. Mihăescu *La romanité* 241). The word was also preserved in the A-Romanian where it has the forms *vărzare*, *virdzare* (v. DDA).'

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Verde has a large number of derivatives: *verzeală* (*verde* + suf. *-eală*) "verdeață"; *verdeață* (*verde* + suf. *-eață*) "culoare a vegetației cu clorofilă; prospețime; vigoare; mulțime de plante, de frunze, de ramuri verzi etc."/'the color of the vegetation with chlorophyl; freshness; vigour; abundance of plants, leaves, green offsprings, etc.'; *verzime* (*verde* + suf. *-ime*) "verdeață"/'green vegetation, green plants'; *verzitură* (*verde* + suf. *-itură*) – is used mainly in the plural and it means "unripe, green fruits"; *verziciune* (*verde* + suf. *-iciune*) "fruct, legumă verde; (reg.) verdețuri; verzeală"/'green vegetable, fruit; *verzel*, *verzea* (*verde* + suf. *-el*, *-ea*) "(reg.) verzișor"; *verzioară* (*vedre* + suf. *-ioară*) "(slang term) green banknote"; *verdaică* (*verde* + *-aică*)*/verdoaică* (*verde* + *-oaică*) "ciocănitoare verde"/'green woodpecker'; *verdete* (*verde* + suf. *-ete*)[25] "lemn verde; bâtă scurtă și groasă"/'green wood; short, thick woodstick'; *verzui* (*verde* + suf. *-uĭ*) "de o culoare care se apropie de verde"/'greenish; *verziu* (*verde* + suf. *-iŭ*) "verzui"/'greenish'; *verzos* (*verde* + suf. *-os*) "(obsolete and regional) verzui"/'greenish'; *verziș* (*vedre* + suf. *-iș*) "verdeață"/'green vegetation, green plants; greenness'; *verzișor* (*verde* + suf. *-ișor*) "cu nuanță de verde"/'with a green tinge'; *verzuliu* (*verde* + suf. *-uliu*) "(rare) verzui"/'greenish'; *verzuriu* (*verde* + suf. *-uriu*) "(rare) verzui"/'greenish'; (*a*) *înverzi* (*în-* + *verde*) "a colora în verde; a se face verde; a înfrunzi; a se acoperi cu verdeață etc."/'to color in green; to turn green; to leaf; to become covered with vegetation'; *înverzire* (*înverzi* + suf. *-re*) "colorare în verde; acoperire cu verdeață a naturii"/'coloured in green; covered with vegetation'; *înverzitor* (*înverzi* + suf. *-tor*) "(rare) care face să devină verde, care înverzește"/'which causes to become green', etc.

The neologism *vernil* (< Fr. *vert Nil*) designates a certain tinge of green: "verde-deschis" (light-green). The same tinge is rendered by the archaic synonym of *vernil*, *lahaniu* (< Tc. *lahana*, Ngr. *λάχανον*).

The compound *verde-veronez* – found in art dictionaries in the form *verde Veronese*[26] – derives from the name of the Italian painter Paolo

[25] Cf. *DLR*, 2002, p. 351, *verdet*, *verdeț*: singular form constructed after the plural *verdeți* (the plural form of *verdete*).

[26] Popescu, 1998, p. 195.

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Veronese, reprezentative of the Venetian School of Painting of the XVI-th century (the name of the artist being in its turn derived from the name of the town where he was born) and designates "the blue-greenish color" which appears frequently in his paintings.

4. *Verde* is part of various syntagmatic combinations, some of them expressing a chromatic characteristic, others not. Thus, it is used to designate:

- a) vegetation, plants, green areas: *zonă verde* designates "porțiunea de teren cultivată cu iarbă, pomi, flori etc."/'area cultivated with grass, trees, flowers, etc.'; *gard verde* "gard viu"/'hedge'; *aur verde* "vegetație; (prin restricție de sens) pădure"/'vegetation; (narrow meaning) forest'; *algele verzi*/*green algae*, from the same family as *verzeala zidurilor*, are a group of inferior, autotrophic, green plants (whose body is no differentiated into root, stem and leaves); *piață verde* "piață de legume proaspete"/'fresh vegetable market'; *icre verzi* "salată de pătlăgele verzi tocate, preparată cu ceapă, ulei şi oțet"/'salad made of green tomatoes, onion, oil and vinegar'; the syntagm *icre verzi* has also a connotative meaning, designating "an imaginary, impossible thing".

In the dialect spoken in the area of Oltenia, the expression *a visa codrii verzi* means to want impossible things "a dori lucruri imposibil de realizat"; *caii verzi* (*pe pereți*) also means "lucruri imposibile, de necrezut; himere, inepții"/'impossible, unbelievable things, chimeras, nonsense'. By analysing the significations of these expressions, we draw the conclusion that they partly overlap.

- b) traditions, tv programmes, campaigns: *joia verde* "a noua joi după Paşti – considerată zi de sărbătoare"/'the ninth Thursday after Easter, considered a holiday'; *Cod Verde* is a campaign meant to draw people's attention on the major environment problems and to lead as many Romanians as possible towards an adequate, eco-protective behaviour; *Ştirea verde* is the title of a radio programme, ("eco") broadcast by *Europa FM* radio station, which aims at protecting nature by all the means man disposes of.

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- c) games, sports: *masa verde* designates "masa acoperită cu postav verde, la care se joacă jocuri de noroc (snooker, biliard)"/'the table covered with a green fabric used for gambling'; the expression underwent a meaning extension, designating the table around which negotiations take place "masa în jurul căreia se duc tratative"; *centură verde* "centură a cărei culoare exprimă o anumită poziție în ierarhia luptătorilor de karaté sau jiu-jitsu"/'belt whose colour designates a certain position of the owner in the hierarchy of karaté or jiu-jitsu fighters'.

- d) permission, approval, interdiction: (*undă*) *verde*, *foc verde*[27], *linie verde*, *semafor verde*, *lumină verde* "liberă trecere, acces liber". Some of these expressions are calques after syntagms existent in other languages: Fr. *feu vert*, It. *semafora verde*, Engl. *green light*. *A da verde* is a slang expression for *to approve* "a aproba".

Cercul verde is an index used by some TV stations (*Antena 1*, *Prima TV*), which appears on the screen in order to forbid peole under age to watch some programmes not recommanded to them. The same signification is held by the red square *pătrățelul/pătratul roşu* – it indicates programmes forbidden to people under 18, since they can negatively influence the psychological development of children.

- e) pigments, dyeing substances: acquiring the value of a noun, *verde* means "materie (colorantă) de culoare verde"/'green colouring substance'; when it designates some substances used in the chemical industry, *verde* expresses a chromatic characteristic: *verde de Paris* designates "cristalele mixte de arsenit de cupru şi de acetat de cupru, foarte toxice, folosite ca insecticid"/'mixed crystals of copper arsenite and copper acetate which are extremely poisoning and are used as insecticide'; *verde-malachit* (or *verde de China*) is "materia colorantă bazică, ce dă colorații verzi, cu nuanțe albastre puțin rezistente"/'dyeing substance of basic nature from which

[27] "O formație total absurdă este *foc verde* care traduce expresia fr. *feu rouge*, în care fr. *feu* are semnificația «semnal luminos, semafor», accepție inexistentă în română!" (Dimitrescu, 2006, p. 177)/'A totally absurd collocation is *foc verde* which is the literal translation of the French *feu rouge*, in which *feu* signifies 'traffic lights', a nonexistent meaning in Romanian!'

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green-blue, low resistance nuances are obtained'; *verde-chinezesc* "colorant textil, extras din coaja de pe ramurile (şi de pe rădăcinile) unor plante care cresc în China"/'fabric dyer extracted from the roots and branches of plants growing in China', etc.

- f) precious stones: *verde-antic* designates jasper ("matostatul") – green semiprecious stone; sometimes, in Romanian folklore, the term *matostat* is found in the leitmotiv: *foaie verde matostat*[28].

- g) mixtures: *aluat verde* (regional expression used in Maramureş) "făină muiată pentru pui"/'a mixture of flour and water to feed the chickens'.

- h) documents: *carte verde*[29] "asigurare de răspundere civilă auto, valabilă numai în afara teritoriului României"/'the green card, an insurance document covering motorists against accidents abroad'.

Omuleții verzi is the generic word for aliens.

La moşii ăi verzi/roşii[30] ("suspect de apropiați de *Verde* sau *Roş-Împărat*"[31]) means 'never' ("niciodată")[32].

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[28] "Cât de mult iubeşte (românul) natura, cu verdele cel mult al ei, ne-o dovedeşte veşnicul început al doinelor cu «frunză verde». (...) Verdele arată trăinicie şi putere de viață." (Coşbuc, 1903, p. 46)/'The attachment of the Romanian to nature and its greenness is proven by the typical beginning of the melancholy Romanian folk songs: «frunză verde». Green means durability and life strength.'

"Ne-am obişnuit cu *frunză verde*... (este drept, aproape de... orice!), cu *alb ca laptele* şi cu alte atâtea grupuri de cuvinte sudate în imagini parcă pe veci; nu însă şi Nichita Stănescu, pentru care există reprezentările *frunză verde de albastru*, *frunză de verdele verdelui* (...) şi numeroase alte probe de «erezie» ale unui încrâncenat act de *dezgrăire*." (Dumistrăcel, 1997, p. 164) /'We got used to the syntagm *frunză verde* (it almost doesn't matter what words follow), as we got used to the idiom *alb ca laptele* and to other expressions which render images petrified for ever; Nichita Stanescu does not submit to these stereotypes and creates structures such as *frunză verde de albastru*, *frunză de verdele verdelui* (...) and many other examples of «heresy» which represent a ferm act of *un-speaking*.'

[29] Fr. *la carte verte*, It. *la carta verde*, Eng. *green card*.

[30] Cf. *DLR*, tomul IX, *R*, 1975, p. 561-562; tomul XIII, *V*, 2002, p. 348.

[31] Dumistrăcel, 1997, p. 143.

[32] These "coloured" *moşi* are probably the basis of the expression *moşi păroşi* (from which *moşi pe groşi* and *a spune/înşira moşi pe groşi* "a vorbi despre lucruri care nu există; a fabula"/to talk about inexistent things' resulted), since the colour *red* is amplified, "dacă ținem seama de formule uzuale în descântece"/'if we consider stereotype formulas, such as: «Pân-la lacul *roş*, *Roş*, *poroş*»; «Ho! Vacă *roşă*, *Poroşă*»; «A venit omul *roş*, *Poroş*». "De

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The one-word compound *butrăverde*, seldom used, designates a merchant wearing a green girdle or apron/"negustor încins cu un brâu (sau purtând un şorţ) de culoare verde"; the word has acquired a depreciative value, meaning 'bourgeois' ("burghez")[33].

The acronym *telverde* (a synonym of the syntagm *număr verde*, 'green number') is used to designate a phone number that can be called free of charge, "număr de telefon la care apelul este gratuit".

The term ver*de* can refer to nouns, names of insects or batrachians, in this latter case indicating the subspecies; these syntagms imply a chromatic characteristic: *fluture verde* "ibelulă (*libelula depressa*)"; *gândac verde* "ileană (*cetonia aurata*); cantaridă (*lytta vesicatoria*)"; *broască/broscuţă verde* "broatec (*hyla arborea*)".

4.1. *Verde* is part of some set phrases: in the colloquial register it refers to an old person who looks still young, full of physical (viril[34]) and mental strength. Such a person is said to be (încă) *verde*[35]. The same meaning was expressed by the Latin collocation *CRUDA SENECTUS* "o bătrâneţe încă verde". When referring to a young person, *verde*[36] means

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la acest lexem ininteligibil în afara incantaţiei basmului, s-a putut ajunge (prin aglutinare) la *păroşi*..."/'From this lexeme which is unintelligible outside the context of fairy tales, it derived by agglutination the form *păroşi*…' (Dumistrăcel, 1997, p. 144)

[33] About this meaning, Stelian Dumistrăcel says that the status of the referent named in this way is by no means a 'shameful' one: "statutul celui astfel numit nu apare, în niciun caz, ca unul «ruşinos»". And, the original denotation, without any ideological connotation, and, above all, without clichés, since the origin is a type of clothing, was discovered by Slavici, in the description of the outfit of a merchant who was also a discrete money lender: "denotaţia originară, «neangajată» ideologic şi mai ales fără marca limbii de lemn, dat fiind că, de fapt, se porneşte de la un specific vestimentar, a fost descoperită de Slavici, în descrierea costumului unui negustor ce era, în acelaşi timp, şi discret cămătar: «... un om original, care umblă şi azi îmbrăcat în caftan, încins cu brâu verde – tradiţionala burtăverde – şi poartă vechea şapcă cu cozoroc» (*Cel din urmă armaş*, 1923)." (Dumistrăcel, 1997, p. 257)

[34] It is a metaphor using the domain of trees (cf. *fir-tree*, *oak* a.s.o. to designate well-built, resistent men./Metaforă din lumea arborilor (cf. *brad*, *stejar* ş.a. despre oamenii bine făcuţi şi rezistenţi). In a way it opposes the word *uscat*: "Se opune, într-un anumit sens, lui *uscat*." (Iordan, 1975, p. 342)

[35] Cf. Eng. *green old age* "bătrâneţe viguroasă".

[36] Cf. Eng. *greenhorn*, *green hand* "ageamiu, boboc; novice, începător".

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"fără experiență, imatur". The idiomatic expression *a fi verde pe la urechi*, used in the south of Transylvania, refers to an extremely young person who has acquired the experience of an adult. The meaning is broadened in the idiom *de când cu buricul verde* which means "de când era copil mic"/since early childhood.

Verdele ochilor from the proverb *ochii verzi, niciodată să nu-i crezi* renders the idea of uncertainty, of lack of trust; another idiom, *cum o vezi cu ochii verzi* means "așa cum este/sunt în realitate"/as they really are.

Limbajul verde signifies the direct, frank manner of speech; through a meaning broadening the idiom *a*(*-i*) *spune* (*cuiva*) *verde în față* has acquired the meaning "a(-i) spune (cuiva) adevărul direct, în față; a fi sincer" and *a spune/îndruga verzi și uscate*[37] – "a vorbi multe și fără rost, a flecări, a trăncăni".

In everyday language, *a avea inimă verde* means 'to be jolly'/"a fi vesel"; *a i se face* (*cuiva*) *verde înaintea ochilor/a vedea verde* implies "a i se face (cuiva) rău (de mânie, de supărare, de ciudă, etc.)"/'to turn green with anger'; and *stele verzi*[38] express an unbearable pain as a result of a blow, hit, etc.

Verde is also seldom used in popular language with connotative value, meaning 'crowd'/"mulțime". In *DLR* there is one attestation of the term with this meaning[39], from Reteganul, P. II, 20: "Când vei fi într-un năcaz mare, să sufli în el [în corn], că vor ieși verde de cătane, de va fi greu pământul de ei". The meaning comes from the green uniform worn by the soldiers[40].

In the former half of the twentieth century in Romanian political language, *verde* was the symbol of the legionary movement; at present it is associated with the international ecologist movement; the plural form *verzii*,

[37] Fr. *en ranconter de vertes et de pas mûres*, it. *raccontare cose scandalose* (*di tutti colori*).

[38] In his poem *Vade retro...* George Topârceanu uses the next comparison humoristically and ironically: „Să vezi numai stele/ Verzi ca leușteanul,/ Numai stele și... luceferi verzi ca leușteanul!" (Topârceanu, 1966, p. 75)/'To see nothing but stars/ As green as lovage,/ Just stars and... celestial lights as green as lovage!'

[39] *DLR*, tomul XIII, *V*, 2002, p. 349.

[40] Cf. *verzișor*.

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with the enclitic *-i*, is used to designate the members of this movement and *Partidul verzilor* is "partidul în care activează verzii/ecologiştii". *Verdele* also designates the current whose doctrine claims that life can be lived in the middle of the nature, by giving up technology and returning to the ancestral way of life.

The adverbial phrase *la iarbă verde*, determines verbs such as: *a ieşi, a petrece, a merge, a manca*, etc., its meaning being "în mijlocul naturii".

The adjectival phrase *de verde*, used when referring to cards, means 'spades'/"care are ca semn un vârf de lance de culoare neagră". The same syntagm is used by fortune-tellers to designate people with green eyes and black hair, "cu ochii verzi şi părul negru".

The syntagms created by reference to natural elements are very expressive and can render various tinges of green: *verde ca iarba*, *verde ca prazul, verde ca marea, verde ca smaraldul, verde ca fundul de talaz.*

In the 19-th century, the diminutival form in the plural, masculin gender, *verzişori*, designated "corpul de trupă al cavaleriei (înființat de Matei Basarab)"/'the cavalry unit founded by Matei Basarab'. The singular form *verzişor* designated the soldier of this army corps, who wore a green uniform: "ostaşul cu uniformă de culoare verde, care făcea parte din acest corp de armată".

In contemporary Romanian, both in slangish and colloquial style, the diminutival plural form, *verzişori*[41] (with nominal value) designates green-coloured banknotes, especially US dollars. The plural form *verzii* is used both in the political domain, referring to ecologists, and in sports, where it is used as a metonymy to designate the members of a certain team – *Saint Etienne*.

As a regionalism, the diminutival form *verzişoară*, (in the singular, feminine gender) designates asort of light-green grapes from which a superior quality wine is obtained: "varietate de struguri cu boabele de culoare verde-deschis, din care se obține un vin de calitate superioară". Also

[41] Cf. Am. E. *green stuff* "bani cash; verdeață (lire/dolari)"/'cash; pounds; dollars'; *greenery* "verdeață, bani (bancnote)"/'money, banknotes'.

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as a regionalism, *verzişor*, with the variant *verdişor*, is used in Moldavia and refers to mint brandy/"rachiul de mentă" (having the colour green).

Last century, in the '50s, a green piece of clothing, green berets, *beretele verzi*[42], became the official name of a certain type of special troops in the USA army.

5. As it is obvious from the presentation of the etymology of the chromatic term under discussion, in time, most words (names of colours) have acquired new meanings, developing multiple synonyms and antonyms; at the same time, semantic transfers are frequently quite unusual.

Another conclusion is that the Romanian vocabulary is not an amorphous mass but a system of organised structures, more or less homogeneous.

Chromatic terms evince the way in which words inherited from Latin have preserved their central role within the language structure and also their functioning in the course of time up to the present-day. The presence of chromatic terms in various domains of Romanian culture and civilisation, as it happens in many other cultures and civilisations, proves the central place they occupy in a language. By means of these terms we are presented social, economic, political, cultural, sport events, as it appeares from the classifications of the syntagms containing names of colours.

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[42] *The Green Berets* is the title of a movie made shortly before the North-Vietnamese counteroffensive in 1968, which glorifies the extraordinary heroism of American soldiers in Vietnam.

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