THE COLOUR STYLISTICS IN NICOLAE LABIŞ' POETRY

SUMMARY

Arising from the desire to offer a new reading outlook on Nicolae Labiş' poetry, the aim of the present thesis is to investigate systematically and to make a study on the chromatics expressiveness of Labiş' lyric, thus redefining, from this point of view as well, the place held by the poet in the history of Romanian literature.

The opportunity of such an approach is justified by the absence of a far-reaching paper on this theme and the novelty of our attempt is demonstrated by the constant attention paid by the literary criticism in Nicolae Labiş' work which is commented upon in the latest and most imposing dictionaries of Romanian literature and in commemorative monographical studies.

We defined Nicolae Labiş' personality from the triple perspective of *(self)portrait in landscape,* being certain that the poetic self comes into view at the intersection of personal lyric with the one of roles and masks (Tudor Vianu).

Being an interdisciplinary study, we set conceptual boundaries in both fields – of chromatics and stylistics – starting from theoretical reference papers in the mentioned fields, that were reflected in a varied bibliography that included recent titles and authors and also prominent names in the theory and history of the Romanian literature, stylistics and fine arts.

The colour expressiveness is pointed out at each approach level. Our paper has a concentric development, amplifying the research field and bestowing consistency to the assertions by the concreteness and multitude of the artistic language facts that have been written down.

The colour has followed a complicated path of semantics, evolving from a simple decorative accessory to colour-metaphor, from pragmatism to poetic ineffable. It became a sign that continually enriched itself by figurative meanings. The suggestive-expressive gains were handed down from one generation to another.

The gothic art is the first one to bring forward the nobleness and the subtlety of chromatics, its potential to be incorporated in the synaesthaetic ritual, while modern art (poetry, painting, music) opens unexpected perspectives towards the suggestive dowry of the colouring, leaving the door open to the re-semansiology of this existential dimension.

The field of colour lexemes in the Romanian language is dynamic, permanently removing and assimilating colouristic words. It consists of two classes: the first one is made up of the name of the six main colours (yellow, red, blue, green, white and black) belonging to language and metalanguage that can group the other colouristic terms in paradigms; the second one, with an extremely large and continually productive area is made up of lexemes (derived with the suffix –**iu**) that define colour by the colouristic quality of the object itself.

There are some specialists that state that white, grey and black are not colours (non-colours, neutral colours).

Like all the other colouristic values, these are also the result of the light perception game and therefore, we include them in the field of chromatics.

The human being does not live in a neutral chromatic environment. The variety of shades, contrasts, harmony all lead us to a universe of meanings that were filtered and treasured in the collective memory. A chromatic semantics and syntax were developed in the course of the historical evolution. The colour symbolism is conventional and free, it follows a code that the human must know.

Within the artistic and poetic language, the order and frequency of colour, their ponderability represent a further element of communication that has a metalinguistic function.

The order expresses the priority of significance, the logical accent of the message.

The frequency highlights the specific weight of each significance. The obsessive return of a colour, its presence among the key-words renders the emotional states of the author's message.

As far as the colour ponderability is concerned, it was noticed that, besides *white* and *black,* the most often seen colour is *red.*

The colour has a remarkable expressive potential that allows it to have the glitter of the metaphor or the high, synthetic meaning of the symbol. There is a discreet chromatics and a persistent one, a real one and another unreal. Everything that is unusual in colour is wrapped up in poetry.

The so-called study starts with *The statistics of the implicit and explicit chromatic lexemes in Nicolae Labiş' poetry* to prove that there is a real research basis.

The subchapter called *The ambiguity of the implicit chromatics* renders the difficulties in revealing the colouristic significance in the structure of some polysemantic words or in the syntagms that have a semantic valence that is not made unambiguous by the context.

We analysed the causes that determine *the loss of chromatic identity* of some words that are present in Labiş' lyric in order to explain their omission from the colouristic field.

The real (relevant) dichromatism (the loss of chromatic identity) registers 75 occurrences while the *unreal one* (non-relevant) only 43 occurrences. This report distinguishes the conspicuous mimetic character of the manner in which Labiş represents his outlook on world in the poetic space.

Labiş' imagism is based not only on colour, but also on the pictorial potential of the Romanian language and on the suggestions offered by *the elements of artistic language* that are present in the work of the teenager coming from Mălini.

In the field of the *elements of explicit chromatics,* the *real* colour represents 59% out of the total of 287 of occurrences noticed in the volume *Poems* (1987), edition that was cared for by Gheorghe Tomozei. In this register, *white* has 37%, *black* 15%, *red* 14%, *yellow* 12%, and are followed by the other colours.

We notice the fact that Nicolae Labiş "vibrates" chromatically in the field of national and international sensibility that was outlined by Simion Florea and Judith Miller.

Within the *unreal chromatics* (non-relevant, subjective) we find 41% of Labiş' colouristic lexemes. *Black* is on the first place with 18%, then comes *red* with 14%, *white* 12% and *yellow* with 10%.

On this level, Nicolae Labiş drew nearer to the frequency of biased colour seen in Bacovia's poetry ("in the latter's poetry, out of the 186 presences of colour number 86 that represent 46%, are those of unreal colour" – Aura Imbăruş, p. 157). The visual impact is different due to the manner specific to each poet to find situations in which he could emphasize the chromatics.

Adding up the occurrences within the field of *real and unreal explicit colouring* we noticed that *the white dominates* having 26% from the total of appearances. It is followed by *black* 16%, *red* 13% and *yellow* 11%.

The subchapter called *The space of real chromatics and its expressive valences* emphasizes the fact that Nicolae Labiş organizes this field in a poetic way, bestowing upon it aesthetic virtues, thrill and suggestive power.

Following the *distribution of real colour* we become aware of the large number of lexemes that belong to this semantic area that characterizes *nature.* This is a natural aspect of the lyric poetry.

Blue (100%), green (67%), black (56%), yellow (50%) and white (48%) use here most of their chromatic task.

The portrait will also attract white, yellow and black in an obvious perceptible manner.

Silver is entirely placed in the area of different objects, followed by red, grey, brown and polychromatism.

Labiş' subjective chromatics (unreal colour) gives expression to the poet's initiation in the colour alchemy and the exercise to reconfigure the world in a poetic way.

The unreal blue is the most dematerialised colour that has the biggest visual effect and emotional echo. It fills the space up to saturation and turns it into a magical area. The supersaturation confers the over- reality note, of delirious perception.

The unreal chromatics reveals more and more its expressive potential in the lexical field of nature. Green (91%), silver (82%), yellow (75%), blue (55%) and red (50%) lend their colouring vibration to the author of another reality.

The unreal red (37%), blue (36%) and grey (34%) sketch illusive portraits.

The unreal black wraps in his coat different objects in a proportion of 39%. White (29%) gives the image a phantom-like consistency, associating with grey (32%). The polychromatism wastes half the load of unreal colour in the multitude of surrounding objects.

Watching closely *the expressive potential of Labiş' chromatics from a stylistic perspective* we thought to be necessary an incursion in the research area of this language science in order to redefine its field and to support its importance and novelty in the approach of the literary phenomenon.

The stylistics is a dynamic and viable science that goes through a permanent information exchange with the related subjects. It is situated in the lively area of the meaning bestowing process, analysing the effects of language subjectivity.

The stylistic universe is a complex one and it represents the intersection point of expressive values of all language levels: phonetic, lexical and morphosyntactic.

The emotional valences that derive from the phonetic and rhythmical structures (euphony and eurhythmy) are born from the quality of vowels to be centres of syllable sonority. Their suggestion and sensibility power is underlined by the consonantal background.

The phonetic expressiveness is a result of the energy exchange between shape and meaning, the most important part being played by the meaning. Uplifting to a metaphorical and symbolical level, it will irradiate "a poetic nimbus" towards the sonorous cover and thus will create an expressive- semantic unity.

The perfection of style and expression implies a continuous moulding and search for words and it represents the skill of handling them

The poetry activates the phonic substance of the words to the maximum. The suggestive effect is looked for and the latent symbolic values of the words are frequently renewed.

Being sensible to the musical values of the language, Nicolae Labiş selects them from their different expressive registers and immortalizes them in the universe of his own poetic language.

In the context of sonorous figures, the *rhyme* is the generous space for revealing the poetic potential of the *chromatic* lexemes.

Labiş' versification maintains essentially almost all the elements of the classical euphony with rhythm and rhyme.

Mixed rhyme prevails (in 73 poems) as an expression of the poet's freedom will that was inspired by his impetuous feelings.

Regarded as a "generator centre" (Caracostea), "textual matrix" (Blaga), the rhyme has multiple functions: aesthetic, euphonic and semantic.

Labiş placed chromatic lexemes in the privileged place of the rhyme, generating games of a different poetic expressiveness that were analysed by us in great detail of the chromatic spectre that was present in his poetry.

When synthesizing the qualities of Labiş' rhyme that contains colouristic element, we thought it was difficult to find a resonating element that was suitable to the explicit chromatic lexemes. For example, out of the *18 appearances of white* (direct and indirect) in euphonical duplicates, only one includes the explicit chromatic lexeme ("calm-white"). The others belong to the implicit white. The situation is similar for black and violet.

While the lexemes of the implicit (indirect) chromatics had 104 appearances instead of rhyme, the explicit chromatic lexemes add up to 40.

There are two exceptions to the ratio above. One is made up of Labiş' *silver* that appears 8 times in the explicit register, in euphonic duplicates (rhyme) and only 2 in the implicit register. *Green* appears as many times in both the registers.

We noticed the fact that *red* (20 occurrences), yellow (19 occurrences) and white (18), including also the terms of semantic series, take the first three positions in the rhyme of Labiş' poetry, while violet (4 occurrences) takes the last position.

The feminine rhymes (76) are more numerous than those masculine (68). Having a vowel-like nature, they give the poetry an addition of musicality.

The masculine rhymes, with their solemn tone, are characteristic to elegiac tonality that is present in many poems by Labiş.

The almost even distribution of the vowel rhymes (feminine) and of the consonant ones (masculine) in the lyrics analysed by us, can be considered as a reflex of the balanced phonic character of the Romanian language, as it was underlined by Sextil Puşcariu.

Watching closely the classification of the rhymes (including a chromatic element) depending on the morphological classes of words that develop a phonic, expressive resonance, we noticed that 59% of the total of 144 euphonic duplicates are represented by the heterocathegorial rhyme. By this option Labiş is keeping up with the tendency of the modern literature to "create a more suggestive hetero-cathegorial rhyme." (Funeriu)

We notice the fact that the noun with a chromatic load takes part in a proportion of 60% in creating the consonant duplicate, endowing the image with visual concreteness and consistency.

The colouristic adjective gets involved in a proportion of 44% in the phonetic and semantic expressivity of rhyme while the verb represents only 6% of the total of elements that depict colour. Its presence makes the use of chromatic and achromatic scale to be more dynamical and creates the temporal perspective in poetry.

Sporadic rhyme is a result of the creative effort to open, by means of suggestion and musicality, new paths to the universe of knowledge. Nicolae Labiş investigated all the language levels and artistically valued elements that belonged to regionalisms and popular language, the aesthetics of ugliness, of the lexical-stylistical contrast and the field of neologism.

Placing a direct chromatic term on the "privileged" position of the rhyme, it made the search for euphonic correspondents to be difficult. This explains the small number of such duplicates (40 out of 144 rhymes with a chromatic element, which represents 28%), and also a certain characteristic: the emergence of the *incomplete crossed rhyme,* by the lack of auphonic correspondent of the direct chromatic lexeme.

Except for rhyme and apocope, the role of the explicit chromatic terms is less obvious in the other figures of sonority (rhythm, alliteration, assonance, tautophony). For this reason we turned to the exploration of the expressive values of the implicit chromatics.

The alliteration contributes to the image dynamic, enhancing its power of suggestion and the semantic significance in the poetic ensemble. Labiş enhanced the value of artistic suggestions for this method, creating internal acoustic harmony, symmetries and imitative euphonic effects emphasizing the progression, periodicity and intensity of an auditive phenomenon with poetic reverberations.

Watching closely the consonants involved in the expressive euphonic game of *alliteration,* we discover the fact that the sounds **v** and **d** hold the most important place due to the remarkable acoustic relief, the frequency of its appearance in verse and the great number of poems.

The alliteration generates the impression of supporting the sound tonality, enlarging its emotional and semantic echo. It includes a small number of explicit chromatic terms (11). The base analysis of the majority of verses is represented by the implicit chromatics.

Also called "expressive phonetic timbre" (Gh. N. Dragomirescu) or "vocal harmonies under accent" (Tohăneanu), the *assonances* determine the progression of the poetic discourse and underlines the intensity of the artistic emotion.

The frequent presence of the vowel *a* in the assonance (50 occurrences), with its imposing and solemn psychological halo, highlights the large rhythm with a deep soothing breath of Labiş' lyric.

The sounds with a light, open, harmonious timbre (*a, i, o*) are much more frequent (90 occurrences) in this type of sonorous figure than those with low euphonic qualities (*ă, î, u*), that add up to 43 occurrences.

As in the case of alliteration, we find few terms of explicit chromatics in assonance (8). Those of indirect colouring are prevailing, enlarging their expressivity dowry.

We notice the same small presence of direct colouring words in *tautophony* and *apocopy.*

The sounds included in the phonetic figures of Labiş' lyric evoke acoustic moments similar to their sonorous nature, develop semantic suggestions and stylistic values in proportion to the marked terms. By their artistic effect, they support the chromatic suggestions that prevail in Labiş' poetry: the vowel *a*, frequent in sonours figures, emotionally intensifies the dominant *white* on a visual level.

Before dealing with the *stylistic values within the lexical-semantical area of Labiş' chromatics,* we worked on *the conceptual delimitations* that emerge in the framework of current theories as regarding the tropes (semantic and metasemem figures of speech).

Our choice for operating terms is at the meeting point of the specialists' opinions in the fields of stylistics, the literary theory and criticism.

The analysis of the *poetic iridescence within Nicolae Labiş' colouristic register highlighted:*

a. the relative freedom of colour lexemes compared to the context, they being able to move within the most varies lexical fields (animate, inanimate, human, abstract, concrete). Each colour then outlined its lexical affinities with different meaning areas from the immediate reality or from psychological phenomena

b. making the best use of the stylistic potential of the semantic series is owed to the fact that chromatic lexemes, these "words-axiom" do not allow lexical options (neological, popular, regional).

We extended our study on the poems (most of them are new-fangled) from the volumes *The Death of a Poet, Memorial Album – Nicolae Labiş* and *Poems* (1967), where we perceived stylistic phenomena that are revealing for Nicolae Labiş' personality.

White represents the most often occurrences of the *direct colour* (85), characterizing natural phenomena, terms relating to fauna, flora or relief as well as elements of the *human anatomy or inner life.* Connected to this last aspect, we point out the fact that it has *the largest share compared to* the other chromatic lexemes. (21 occurrences).

In *the semantic field* of this colour, the word *snow* appeared 47 times (out of 128 of the implicit colour), holding a proper and figurative sense. It represents Labiş' striving for a land of purity, meditation and peace.

Labiş' white is one that belongs to the ultimate silence. Morbid elements (bones, skulls, etc.) are a significant presence in the poet's lyric, reminding us of a painful past that made a strong impression on his sensitivity.

The plasticizing epithets, the metaphor *in praesentia* (6 occurrences), *in absentia* (5 occurrences) and hypallage (10 occurrences) are contending for this chromatic space.

Due to the creative sensitivity and intuition and the use of poetic white, Labiş enters the background of great poetry next to Eminescu, Macedonski, Mallarmé etc.

Red, with its 72 occurrences in the explicit chromatic field, takes the second position on the colouristic palette of the young poet.

This colour marks the beginning and the end of life, just like white and black. It is distributed with lexemes on the chromatic field of emotional states, of ideology, of human anatomy etc.

The rich suggestions of the *implicit red* (purple, ruby, blood, fire etc.) compete in a poetic manner with the *explicit red. Blood* outlines colour spots in 97 occurrences while the *fire* has 205 occurrences. Adding up all 25 presences of other elements with colouristic contribution, we notice the substantial presence of *red* (implicit and explicit) in Labiş' imagery, creating 399 occurrences, almost double the presence of white (explicit and implicit), that totalises 213 occurrences.

The lexical field of *fire* prevails in the verses written by the teenager from Mălini (416 occurrences among which 205 with chromatic value) and it is, next to "snow", another "stylistic matrix" of Nicolae Labiş' creative personality, a restless seeker of chastity, ranging among the intricate purifying rituals. "The world *pure* (…) means in Sanskrit *fire…*" (Gilbert Durand).

The author is dominated by the "Empedocles complex".

Labiş' red is one of the inner burning sensations, of the enthusiasm, but also of the violent death, of war and suffering.

The plasticizing epithets, metaphor *in praesentia* (3 occurrences) that *in absentia* (5 occurrences), hypallage (5 occurrences) takes the central position among the figures of speech that are present in the expressiveness area of this colour. We notice the oxymoron (4 constructions) and the synaesthaesis.

The explicit black holds the third position, as a share in the chromatic register of the adolescent poet and the second place, after white, in the human outline.

He gains a large semantic value, bestowing the lexical fields with special identity: that of war, social turmoil, moral smearing, of domestic life, etc.

The implicit black makes the industrial environment, the gloomy spaces more plasticizing, and a fauna of damnation marked by the negative symbolism of this colour.

The epithet "black" gains multiple significances in the contexts created by Labiş, besides the one outside chromatics: young, grown, deep, burnt, worn out, troubled, without stars, decayed, ill-fated, fruitful, concentrated, aggressive etc.

Revealing metaphors (2 examples) are competed by the plasticizing ones (4 examples). We also observe the presence of catachresis (3 examples). Metonymy (2 examples), synecdoche (1 example) and comparison (1 example) are barely represented. The oxymoron has 3 presences.

Under a symbolic aspect, *green* has, like most colours, both positive characteristics (colour of harmony and balance, of purification) and negative (reminding us of venom, poison, "cursed water", death).

In Labiş' work, the green tends to develop figurate meanings in the context of "spellbound water", of the vegetal world, of the urban space.

The fir tree is one of the *key-words* of Labiş' flora, an expression of the will to live, of unchanged permanence.

The revealing metaphors (4 examples) include the water register thus suggesting the life inconsistency, the scarcity of human condition, "the great passing". We notice two plasticizing metaphors, hypallage (2 examples) and the oxymoron (2 examples) and also comparison, metonymy and synecdoche, the personification with one illustration.

We keep in mind the strong plasticizing role of the *explicit yellow* that is present in the lifeless-concrete environment of the young poet's creation, in 25 different contexts – expression of the selective effort to discover the new expressive valences of this chromatic element.

It is distributed in the semantic field of nature (40%) of heavenly bodies, of suffering and illness.

In the domain of epithet, we see the presence of some chromatic stereotypes and also the one of "evil" yellow (the determinant diminishes the plasticizing - colouring character in order to gain a moral sense).

The metaphors *in praesentia* (2 examples) generate metaphorical series. The comparisons become important (4 examples), followed by metonymy (3 examples) and personification (2 examples).

The explicit blue (31 occurrences) dominates the lexemes with *indirect decoding* (12 occurrences). This fact determines emphasized visual perception, the semantic outline of the colour. It has plasticizing features in the concrete environment and heuristic qualities when it determines the elements of the abstract world.

The blue gives the space a delirious shape, and the elements of décor of from the animate field are often wrapped in unreal, paradoxical chromatics.

The plasticizing epithet is plentiful. And so is the metaphoric epithet (4 examples).

The aetherial character of love is suggested by a revealing metaphor. We also take notice of 6 plasticizing metaphors that are the expression of dream and sheer ideal substance sublimation.

The explicit violet (2 examples) is dominated by the suggestions made by implicit colours (20 examples) which had terms (such as *bluish, pale, dark circle*) that were endowed with poetic irradiations in the creations of Eminescu, Arghezi, Bacovia. Their high frequency in literature made them even more flexible to the context and this may be the reason why Labiş prefers them.

The metaphoric epithet is accompanied by a plasticizing one.

The author finds reasons for poetic delight in *the explicit chromatics of silver* (21 unrepeated presences) that rarely makes him resort to implicit colour (3 occurrences).

Labiş' verses outline the correspondence between *silver and purified emotions*. The intention of the author is to sacralize the concrete world, the hearing field and the elements of nature. He associates once silver with an abstract element.

In the register of this colour, the epithet acquires the highest poetic values (synaesthetic, oxymoronic and metaphoric ones). The plasticizing metaphors (7 examples) dominate the figures of speech, followed by synaesthesia (4 examples), hyppalage (2 examples), synecdoche (1example) and comparison (1example).

The "dark fire", a mixture of life and death, of germination and hidden danger, *the explicit brown*, placed in 5 unrepeatable contexts, expresses its poetic load in connection with the lexemes in the semantic field of the elements of nature. The traditional epithet (2 examples) is joined by the synaesthaethic (1 example), oxymoronic (1 example) and personifying one. Both the hypallage and personification can be seen in two contexts.

Labiş' grey is a cold one that feels like solitude, abandon and suffering. It has a plasticizing and appreciative character.

In the poetic register of grey, one can find both the chromatic epithet and the suggestive one that are built in the game of ambiguities generated by the polysemy of this lexeme (meaning *fading, gloomy, sad, depressing*). The metaphoric epithet aesthetically enlivens the withered atmosphere. The comparison (1 example) and hypallage (1 example) represent a less significant presence.

The explicit polysemy puts on the fairy-like clothes of *rainbow* in 9 unrepeatable contexts in Labiş' poetry. The visual image becomes reverberating by using the plural "rainbows"("curcubee" with the alternative phonetic spelling "curcubeie").

The real "figure of speech belonging to nature" due to the poetic colouristic harmony, a contrasting and oxymoronic mixture of sun and storm, or real and unreal, of matter and dream, the rainbow generates the occasional epithet and revealing metaphors in Labiş' poetry (2 examples), being a constant element of the sheer adolescent enthusiasm and surprise felt by Labiş when facing the world show.

Conclusions: Our thesis aims to make a systematic study of the colour expressiveness in Nicolae Labiş' lyric.

By making the statistics of the explicit and implicit chromatic elements, we proved that our investigation has a real research ground which we defined by relating it to the chromatic ambiguity, to the loss of colouring identity and the false chromatic perspective.

We emphasized the presence of real and unreal colour in both observation fields with their full artistic potential, underlining their more obvious mimetic character of Labiş' chromatics.

The pictorial character of the image is the result of binding the suggestive ability of the direct colour (347 occurrences) with the one of the indirect colour (724 occurrences).

Labiş' chromatics is so deep, often full of expressionist vibration. It excludes the poetry of shades which was so appreciated by the symbolists.

The poet divided most of the colouring terms in new, unrepeatable contexts. This is the proof of his creative effort to discover new expressive valences that have not been investigated yet.

The presence of the chromatic elements in the different lexical fields asserts the freedom of the chromatic elements from the context.

As Labiş' poetry becomes more and more reflexive, it gradually loses its colours.

The author used elegantly and in a subtle manner the entire expressive range of the phonetic and semantic figures to confer depth and truthfulness to his poetic message.

His striving for purity, the search uneasiness and the enthusiasm when catching sight of his ideal are the dominant dimensions of Labiş' sensitivity expressed by his chromatics.

Nicolae Labiş' voice has distinctive silver "sound" and a colouring "palette" in the Pantheon of Romanian literature.