



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



Fondul Social European  
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale  
2007-2013



MINISTERUL  
EDUCAȚIEI ȘI  
CERCETĂRII  
ȘTIINȚIFICE

OIPOSDRU



ACADEMIA ROMÂNĂ

### Investește în oameni !

FONDUL SOCIAL EUROPEAN

Programul Operațional Sectorial pentru Dezvoltarea Resurselor Umane 2007 – 2013

Axa prioritară nr.1 „Educația și formarea profesională în sprijinul creșterii economice și dezvoltării societății bazate pe cunoaștere”

Domeniul major de intervenție 1.5 “Programe doctorale și post-doctorale în sprijinul cercetării”

Titlul proiectului: **“Cultura română și modele culturale europene: cercetare, sincronizare, durabilitate”**

Beneficiar: **Academia Română**

Numărul de identificare al contractului: POSDRU/159/1.5/S/136077

# Raport științific de cercetare doctorală

**Tutore îndrumător:  
Acad.SABINA ISPAS**

**Doctorand:  
CORINA DANIELA POPESCU**

**București, 2015**



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



Fondul Social European  
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale  
2007-2013



MINISTERUL  
EDUCAȚIEI ȘI  
CERCETĂRII  
ȘTIINȚIFICE

OIPOSDRU



ACADEMIA ROMÂNĂ

# **Space and Place Marks of spaciousness in the popular epos An anthropological perspective**

**Tutore îndrumător:  
Acad.SABINA ISPAS**

**Doctorand:  
CORINA DANIELA POPESCU**

*This paper is supported by the Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development (SOP HRD), financed from the European Social Fund and by the Romanian Government under the contract number SOP HRD/159/1.5/S/136077*

**București, 2015**

# CONTENTS

I.PRELIMINARIES .....	3
II.The fantastic-mythologic ballad – <i>locus mirabilis, locus terribilis</i> .....	5
III. Identifying <i>topoi</i> in heroic epic poetry – function and symbol .....	19
IV.„Outlaws” and „rascals” – frames of action .....	36
V.Spaces of emotion in family ballads	
1. <i>Interiors and interiorities</i> – „The Lovers” <i>cycle</i> .....	48
2. <i>Conflict spaces in the epos of the family</i> – „Spouses”, „Parents and children”, „Siblings” .....	56
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	65
TEXT CORPORA	
STUDIES IN VOLUMES	

**SPACE AND PLACE  
MARKS OF SPACIOUSNESS  
IN THE POPULAR EPOS  
AN ANTROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE  
SUMMARY**

Although established as a topic of continuous interest for Romanian ethnologic research, the perception and representation of space in the traditional Romanian society proves forever fertile, perpetually opening new research perspectives. In this study, we undertook to analyse the operators of spaciousness which are active in the field of popular mentality and, implicitly, in the structure of the folkloric literary creation. Previous research instituted a certain analytical or terminological pattern in the investigation of the domain, but the anthropologic work tools employed in the present study put forward a new breath, by overcoming the simple inventory of the problems involved in the interpretation of the space and moving towards its anthropologic interpretation, which will lead, in the end, to a configuration of *a poetics of the spaciousness* in the domain of the folkloric imaginary.

The project also uses a double decoding key – the physical-objective reality and the psychological/ethical reality of the man in the traditional society. The literary correlative of this equivalence will be found, investigated in epic poetry, starting with the dichotomic categories traced by the anthropological vision of space in Ernest Bernea's monumental study, *Spațiu, timp și cauzalitate la poporul român (Space, time and causation with the Romanian people)*.

However, the analysis of the elements in the anthropology of space, by performing a clipping in accordance with the selective criteria of specific spatial operators, constitutes the basic aim of the research, starting from general theoretic aspects, which order the analytic view, and continuing with case studies operated on a corpus of representative texts from ballad collections, in which we analysed the symbolic effects of the respective operators. For instance: the ancient, anthropologic roots of the shaping of the initiatic space, anguish-engendering spaces (chapter "**The fantastic-mythologic ballad – *locus mirabilis, locus terribilis***"), the functional gender distinctions of space (familial/public, masculine/feminine, in the chapter about "**Spaces of emotion in the family ballad**" as long as the house represents a transit microcosm between the microcosm of the human body and the cosmos, a connecting element whose iconographic configuration is very important in the social and cultural diagnosis of a community situated in a given space and in a place personalised through residence) etc.

The analysis performed on the establishment of the symbolic dimensions of space continues with the phenomenon of limitation, which gives birth to interpretive interferences of the type object-symbolic effect. For this reason, the limitation corresponds to the form, the creature/object endowed with meaning and function, and the infinite induces a semantics of evil, of the obscure, the unknown, and, consequently, of danger. The limit is therefore order, equivalent to good and beauty; on the other hand, an unfathomable remoteness equals chaos, evil, the ugly, the monstrous. Because, in the

popular algorithm of value clarification, a universally-accepted equivalence is instituted between ethics and aesthetics, to which the identity spaciousness-morality is added. The history of common law is familiar with the juridical phrase “where he belongs” or “where he resides”.

Another ontological involvement of the limit appears as a result of the desire to overcome this condition and, consequently, of the breeding of a form of popular *hubris*, with notable moral and psychological implications. Within the system of the traditional community, the norm orders the cohesion of elements but a fracture, an anguish which critically marks the individual with centrifugal intentions occurs simultaneously with the “departure from custom”, from the norms collectively agreed upon. This feeling of the tragic, born out of the conscience of the classical “going beyond the limit”, is experienced by the hero of “narrative poetry”, who feels acutely the consequences of the transgression of the limit and the generated existential fracture.

The dialectics of the world imagined by traditional philosophy implies, as we intend to demonstrate, three simultaneous geologic and ontological levels, which can be located on a horizontal, syntagmatic and purely descriptive axis but also on a vertical, paradigmatic and symbolic axis. Following the analysis of the various forms of organisation of folk epic, a multistage representation of space was ascertained, consisting of: the chthonic level, the underworld – with specific access configurations and its own governing laws; the telluric level – situated in the centre and the uranic one – exemplary and “sacred”. Exceptional heroes (be they civilising, religious, etc) move between these levels (in the fantastic ballad, for instance, they are the elements), proving the existence of channels of communication concealed to the uninitiated and unusual connecting vehicles (the sun’s ascension to heaven on an iron ladder, etc.), features that we depicted in a few case studies.

The epistemic function of the category of space within the system of traditional Romanian philosophy led us to a number of fertile research fields, whose essential elements are the folkloric imaginary cast in the shape of the folk epos. Hence, conclusions were drawn concerning the types of space representation in *fantastic-mythological ballads* – within whose universe we distinguished between wonderful spaces and terrific ones, in *heroic epic poems* – where we isolated *topoi* that are identifying for the Romanian space, in *the ballad of outlawry* – where we identified the action frames of these heroes, archetypal for the traditional Romanian society, and in *the family ballad* – in whose scope we analysed the effects created by the distribution of the household space and the departure from it, with emotional consequences. We were thus able to construe the existence of a symbolic projection of the elements that exist in the real space, known through sensory perception, the space imagined in various epic forms and also the function changes implied by this transgression. For example, the garden moves from the category of utility spaces into the category of contemplation spaces, only to return later to the initial exemplary value from which it dislocated (the heaven). Thus is obtained a true topological journey of the spatial operator “enclosure”, initially conceived as paradise, then as heaven on earth, and finally as a remembrance of *a priori* perfection.

Interliminal spaces, interval or intermediary spaces, were the subject of a different investigation, leading to conclusions concerning their status of evil (or maleficent) places, obtained through super- or sub-signification. The ambiguous status of these places, caused by the symbolic melange or, on the contrary, a lack of figuration, has exiled these spatial segments to the category of evil. Spaces between borders, shortcuts, the road itself are spaces of negative possibility. Unclaimed by man, they are often taken over by evil and so permanently subject to danger. In the sense of the anthropology of architecture, it has been demonstrated that transit-spaces do not connote negatively, but remain suspended areas, perimeters of expectation and provisionality. Among these, we principally analysed the semantics of an architectural “interval” element – the porch, noticing a double tendency, according to the angle of the anthropological “vision”: centrifugal, as the space before the exit, when seen from inside the house and centripetal, as the space preceding the entrance, when seen from the yard. We found that this game of spatial perspective expresses kinship, neighbourhood or community relations in equal measure, representing mainly an indicator of family cohesion (the son who is away on heroic expeditions is awaited on the porch, this is where matrimonial negotiations are carried out, new journeys are planned and the spoils are divided). This intermediary place (private/public) engenders rites of passage, often developed on the background of “the big meal”. Conviviality ensures assistance but also grants solemnity to the ceremonies, marking the passage in a festive way – to the hero’s adulthood, to a different stage of professional or heroic competence, etc. – thus acknowledged by the community (aspects analysed in the ample chapter “**Identity *topoi* in heroic epic poetry – function and symbol**”).

We have also recorded the presence of an unusual phenomenon within an area rich in symbolism – the forest. There is here a genuine multiplication of centres, the elements that make up this space being, most frequently, distributed uniformly, which creates a levelling of signification. It is only rarely that breach-spaces appear, gaps in the compact structure, exposing what the forest hides, making the one placed within these perimeters (outlaw, thief, lost traveller, etc.) vulnerable. Everything that breaks out of the order of systems constructed around an ordering axis (spatial and ethical) becomes ex-centric and is perceived as deviant and destabilising; after leaving their village, heroes enter perverting spaces (the fair, the pub, the inn, the prison), losing their heroic qualities; when they exit the safe boundary of the forest, the outlaws are captured on the territory of the posse (the town), etc. Alienation from the spaces of safety often causes moral degradation and loss of heroic qualities (phenomena investigated at length in the chapter called “**Outlaws and rascals – frames of action**”).

Taking into consideration the dialectics of the relation between space and place, in a different analytic stage, we used the hypothesis that space is void of an a priori identity, the ones to bestow it being the ones who inhabit it, transforming it in a *place*. The research, however, led to the discovery of a reciprocity of influences, the places imprinted by the presence of inhabitants moulding the civilisation for which it becomes a frame. Within this double form of networking we distinguish the

process of building an individual and collective identity through localisation. Thus, identity topoi are revealed (living spaces, landscapes, various forms of relief and territoriality), acknowledged and defended against intrusions. Consequently, heroic categories such as the outlaw, the soldier, the anti-Ottoman fighter, the hero, in general, are born, their identity and actions always assuming a certain territory (the village, the forest, the land, the “country”). On the literary plane, these forms of spaciousness become narrative “frames”, they engender or support events.

We also pursued another play of directions – *inside/outside* – which structure the space of the family ballad, instituting a discernible tension between intimate and public space and also their conflict-generating overlapping. Here we introduced new analytical grids, drawing upon the field of proxemics and the sociology of space formulated in the works of Erving Goffman, studying the roles induced by the premise of space as a scene of the acts performed within the family and the traditional community. Our investigative course revealed original values, the characters altering their behaviour and speech depending on their location inside or outside the space of the family, putting into practice strategies of adjustment or exclusion etc. In its turn, the family space puts pressure upon its inhabitants, enforcing norms and instituting rules, according to which they are accepted or expelled (the ballads developing the motif of the “unfaithful woman”, “the banished woman”, “the sold woman”, etc. examined in chapter “**Spaces of emotion in family ballads**”). Our investigative endeavour thus covered the journey from the theory of the relation between space and place in the traditional mentality (the group as a “text”) to its symbolic interpretation through the filter of literary anthropology (the text as a group product) to finally achieve a revelation of the values of space as a fundamental dimension of literary folklore and the entire popular culture.



