



„BABES-BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY  
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DEPARTMENT OF EUROPEAN STUDIES

PHD. THESIS  
SUMMARY

*THEORIES AND PARALLELISMS  
IN THE STUDY OF ROMANIAN AND ITALIAN  
TRADITIONAL CULTURES*

**ERNESTO DE MARTINO**

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**Ernesto de Martino, Mircea Eliade, *Tarantism*, *Căluș*,  
Cultural Anthropology, Ethnology, Rite, Myth, Ritual,  
Mythology, Traditional Culture, Identity, Mentality,  
Pro-Europeanism**

# FOREWORD

*His icy blue eyes are accustomed to seeing beyond the margins of our time, and, of course, even past the boundaries of the knowable; and his face is bony, square, with harsh traits. It is the face of a strong man, so familiar to the world of the passed away, even this being easily grasped, that he can be considered to be a man who knows how to appreciate life the way only few people know how to.*



**(in the picture the anthropologue Ernesto de Martino)**

**(Description transcribed by Clara Gallini from the Newspapers of 1958, in the introduction to the volume *Morte e pianto rituale. Dal lamento funebre antico al pianto di Maria*, p. VIII, translated by the author of the Thesis, from Italian into English)**

## ARGUMENT

The present Thesis is a tribute to the life, scientific activity and controversial personality of the Italian anthropologist Ernesto de Martino. His scientific and human destiny constitutes a testimony of the sins and compromises the political and academic environment of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were forced to make. The same as the disease he suffered from, cancer, medical insignnia of the age, his destiny pictures the masque of decadence, marking the society of the old continent. The new century, raised, the same as the Phoenix, from the ashes of a decadent Europe, was finally able to sustain, accept and appreciate his controversial personality, as well as his complex method of research and pro-European vision.

I discovered anthropologist Ernesto de Martino in the first year of doctoral school, during my search for authors who wrote about Italian myths, remnant in Italian traditional culture. Originally the Thesis should have been a simple comparative synthesis of essential segments of myths remnant in customs and folk tradition. It was mainly focused on identifying similar customs in the Romanian and Italian traditional cultures, as well as on analysing their modifications at their passage from folk literature into the literature of the elites. Despite this, the relevance and importance of the Italian anthropologist's work, as well as the fact that he is almost completely unknown to the Romanian academic public, motivated the change of both the title and the subject of the previous version of project.

That is why at the end of the second year of the PhD stage, I took to the attention of my scientific coordinator, Univ. Prof. PhD Ion Cuceu, the new project of thesis and the newly discovered personality. Realizing the multiple benefits an excellent researcher and author such as Ernesto de Martino and his work would bring to the development of the Romanian studies in the field of ethnology, traditional culture, cultural anthropology, but also history of religions, philosophy and European studies, the Professor encouraged me to continue on this way. He suggested the paper should contain a first monographic chapter, in which the eventful life and complex research activity of the Italian author should be extensively illustrated. Thus, I started research from ground zero and managed to find many documentary sources, developing a considerable bibliography on the new subject.



The first version of such chapter should have reconstructed in a philological manner the work of Ernesto de Martino. Such attempt was impossible to carry out from Romania, due to the fact that the author was hardly known in Romania prior to our thesis. His name did not reach, as far as we know, the Romanian academic knowledge, being relatively familiar only to the ethnologists who found interest in studying Italian traditional culture and customs. His work was not translated, his volumes being import merchandise, partially Xerox-copied. Recent years have seen little change to the situation, although, to our knowledge, there were some feeble attempts to translate some of the most important of De Martino's books. Still no Romanian or Italian version of his volumes appeared on the Romanian market.

A good philologist shall always agree that in order to complete a good analysis of an author the researcher should not only take into consideration the volumes it had written, but it is also necessary to entirely know his life and study his private library. What does it mean to reconstruct someone's library? It means to follow the traces left in notes and manuscripts, in the bibliography of the published volumes, first editions and revisited editions, in order to identify and study all the volumes and authors read or researched by the author in question all long his life. The meticulous work of the philologist also includes finding and analyzing the personal volumes of the studied author and comparing them to the results of the analytic comments of the studied author, found both on the margins of the lectured pages and in his written and published works. Thus, identifying the paragraphs which determined some of the studied author's assertions, especially those who matured his critical thinking and analysis, becomes of utmost importance for the scrupulous philologist.

In our case, if we were to proceed only philologically, our attempt of an analysis would fail from the start, for at least three reasons. Firstly, we are sad to admit the impossibility to access the information we could have found directly from the manuscripts, notebooks and field notes of Ernesto de Martino. In fact we partially know such information through articles and descriptions of De Martino's disciples. Secondly, we are forced to admit our personal linguistic difficulties in which regards the German language, faults which we completely assume. A large amount of the volumes De Martino is known to have consulted were written in German, thus inaccessible to us. Thirdly, we were never able to research the exact environment in which De Martino used to work and write, partly because for a large amount of his

life he often changed location, partly because some of his manuscripts or personal volumes were either lost or destroyed.

As Professor Corrado Bologna<sup>1</sup> used to say in 2001, during the Romance Philology course held at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, „La Sapienza” University Rome, the rigorous philologist is compelled to identify exactly the volumes the author he studies consulted. Another edition or a translated version of the book itself is useless and futile, since translation completely changes perspectives, being a partial rewriting of the content of any text. Professor Bologna’s explanation is extremely pertinent also because researchers usually make personal notes in the margins of the books they own. According to the professor, the place/places in which an author studies and creates is a place to be searched and analysed, since certain confluences of images are able to determine or modify a certain interpretation by association with the studied texts. Certainly, the professor was referring to artistic creation, exemplifying by the portraits of some characters of Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*, whose traces, both names and physical traits, were finally found in the *affrescoes* from the walls of his *mecenate*’s library. Thus it was proven that the environment, in which Ariosto used to work and create, inspired greatly his written productions. In this particular case, the reconstruction of the *affresco* managed to shed a new light and perspective upon the philological analysis of Ariosto’s text.

However, should we be put in the position of generalizing Professor Bologna’s theory, we tend to agree that for the work of the philologist such aspects may constitute capital sources, which may help to unveil new perspectives of analysis, both in the case of literature and in the case of scientific works. In which our attempt is concerned, De Martino’s work environment as well as his personal history, which includes the maladies he suffered from, significantly influenced and determined his scientific vision. He himself admits it, and I quote De Martino’s own words in translation:

*I strongly believe it impossible to recreate the cultural history of my own person without taking into consideration the history of my ailments*<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The author of the present Thesis assisted to the Romance Philology Course, focused on the philological analysis of Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*, held by Professor Corrado Bologna, in between February-May 2001, during an Erasmus mobility scholarship offered by the Faculty of Letters, „La Sapienza” University, Rome.

<sup>2</sup> „Credo che non si possa fare la storia culturale della mia persona senza fare la storia delle mie malattie.” Ernesto de Martino, *apud* Cesare Bermani, „Le date di una vita”, in *Il de Martino, Bollettino dell’Istituto Ernesto de Martino*, Florence, nr. 5-6, 1996, p. 17.

As we intentionally hinted above, the third cause which compromises our philological analysis of De Martino's works is the pure accidental, related to the age in which the author lived, as well as to his personal history. Since our anthropologist writes one of his first major works during the apocalyptic times of World War II, using not a laptop, but a portable typewriter, that the house he lived in with his family was completely destroyed during the Cotignola bombardments and that part of the manuscripts have been either lost, or destroyed, in the Publishing House, during the Nazi occupation, we presently face gaps, which are impossible to fill in and documents loss which is impossible to recover. Surely De Martino had to deal with the same difficulty during the years of continuous rewriting of a material, partially lost, partially needing to be kept up to date with the new discoveries in the field, bibliographically speaking. It is the case of the volume *Il mondo magico*, upon which De Martino spend six long years of strenuous work.

The philological method being not only encumbered by the above mentioned reasons, but also insufficient and incomplete for such a complex personality, we have chosen to perform a trans-disciplinary analysis, thus benefitting from the methodology and instruments of different scientific domains. We have separated the thesis into two main parts: the first one bears a deep monographic character, the second being mainly theoretical and practical. Although the first part of the thesis is essentially monographic, the last chapters also contain criticism and interpretations. For the second part of the thesis we have used mainly a comparative analysis and methodology, generally illustrating the theories of Ernesto de Martino and focusing mainly upon one of his most read, known and appreciated by the specialists of the field volume, *La terra del rimorso*. We have chosen to focus upon this volume since the thematic De Martino approached here permits parallelisms to one of the most popular Romanian folk traditions, the *Căluș*.

## STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

**PART I** of the thesis, evocatively entitled *Ernesto de Martino, an Impetuous Personality* constitutes a true monographic approach on the life and activity of Ernesto de Martino. It consists of four large chapters, structured in more specific subchapters and paragraphs focusing on different derivative subjects, covering the extent of more than 170 pages. Each subsequent chapter has the purpose to complete and enrich with details the information of the previous ones.

*Chapter I* of Part I, *A Survey of the Elliptical Data of Ernesto de Martino's Controversial Life*, reconstructs, in a compact block of 70 pages, the life and scientific activity of the Italian ethnologist, as accurately and completely as the Italian bibliography permitted. Although rather large in matters of uninterrupted text by number of pages, we have chosen not to split the information in this first chapter into specific paragraphs, without chronologically separating the life of the author into particular frames or stages. Nevertheless, should we attempt a reordering of his life and activity into separate subchapters we could identify the following five frames:

- 1.1.1. Childhood and undergraduate studies (1908-1927)*
- 1.1.2. Studenthood, war and research apprenticeship (1927-1945)*
- 1.1.3. Political militancy, disease and academic fame (1945-1952)*
- 1.1.4. Maturity of scientific perspective (1952-1960)*
- 1.1.5. Political and academic climax (1960-1965)*

Our choice is justified by the fact that De Martino's theoretic and scientific development is not linear and does not have an ascendant course. His ideas and theories mature in a particular way, all along his life, in a continuous to and fro from their sources of inspiration. In fact, he often returns to ideas he conceived or inspired himself from in his youth, remoulding and reshaping them periodically in the course of his intellectual evolution, in the light of new personal discoveries or lectures. He tended to build human bibliographies and libraries out of the personalities he encountered both on research ground and in scientific debates. Thus, this chapter focuses on the chronological ascension of De Martino, as intellectual, political personality and, last but not least, as human being. We have tried to reconstruct his

portrait in the variety of his facets: child and son, student, son in law, husband and father, married man and separated from his first wife, in love and passionate for his ex-student life and research partner, politician and militant for culture, a book appassionato, field researcher, author of articles and scientific volumes, but also failed essayist, high school teacher and university professor, militant for political propaganda, culture lover and maker, pioneer in reforming Italian ethnology, trainer of young researchers, moulder of destinies and foreseer.

At an overview, by skimming through the pages of the thesis, one would probably be shocked by the multitude of explanatory notes we introduced especially in this first biographical chapter. Far from interrupting the fluency of the text, these footnotes are meant to reconstruct the reality of a world and of an age so different from the one we live today. Thus we believe that such explanations were imperatively necessary, both in the perspective of the historical and geographical distance, separating the present-day Romanian reader from the reality of De Martino's time. Most of the explanatory notes are meant to clarify crucial moments in the understanding of the debates our text unveils, giving meaning and substance to the choices made by the characters surrounding De Martino all long his life. They also complete the general, historical, political, social, intellectual and cultural frame of the thesis, leaving space for multiple interpretations. Thus, we hope they shall not be considered for a second just a cheap method to fill the page.

*Chapter II* of Part I, *A Draft of Intellectual Development*, brings in details upon the relationships De Martino developed with more or less important personalities of the age, some of whom became his teachers and mentors. Out of the great variety of contacts De Martino had, we have selected only the most relevant relationships he developed, and the personalities which most likely have influenced the human, intellectual and scientific becoming of the Italian ethnologist. The chapter is structured in two main chapters, separating the relationship between De Martino and his first mentors from the complex and multiple relationships, cultural contacts and debates with notable characters of the age, who consequently became either his close friends and colleagues or his harshest opponents and enemies.

Despite the fact that one of the most important of De Martino's mentors was Benedetto Croce, we have chosen not to go into details in which regards the scientific meeting of the ethnologist with the philosopher, since the subject was treated

substantially by almost all De Martino's biographers and bibliographers. Partially, our choice was motivated by the multitude of volumes treating the subject extensively. Our modest comments would not have given much contribution to an already exhausted subject. We shall limit to summarize that De Martino's relationship with the Olympic figure of Benedetto Croce is partially overwhelmed of veneration in the period of scientific debut and first political shift of the ethnologist. Then, veneration turns into a polite friendship up until their theoretical approaches part once with the first attempts of the disciple to turn from the Crocian historicism, by applying its boldly modified version to the study of cultural traditions of subaltern social classes and consequently to their forms of expression, the Italian folklore.

We have also avoided going into details about the indirect relationship, mediated by their volumes, between De Martino and Antonio Gramsci, a theoretician of Italian folklore. We partially reconsider this aspect in several other chapters of the thesis. Still, we did not consider relevant enough the introduction of a separate chapter in which to discuss only about such relationship, since our comments hardly could have brought novelty to the already existent specialized literature. In which regards other authors with whom De Martino interacts by means of reading, we have chosen to mention fugitively a special relationship developed with Carlo Levi's volume *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli*. This is one of the books who majorly influenced De Martino's cultural vision upon the South, appearing as a *leitmotiv*, all long his field research, motivating at the same time his intensive field investigations as well as his entire scientific approach. In this case, we considered the subject far too important to exhaust in a brief subchapter, hoping that the future shall grant us the circumstance to study it properly, in an article or small volume.

We have also purposely ignored cultural, scientific and academic contacts of De Martino's, evidenced briefly in the rich collection of correspondence which was so jealously preserved by his consort Vittoria de Palma. Should we have opted to include the minor personalities De Martino kept correspondence with into this chapter, the first part of the thesis would have become a small encyclopaedia of the Italian intellectuality of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

We allotted a special place in the economy of the chapter to the relationship developed between De Martino and the Romanian historian of religions Mircea Eliade. We have also considered important to specify the direct or indirect but permanent contact of the later with other Italian personalities of the age, also

introducing some fragments of his biographical and autobiographical notes, which depict the special space of meditation and documentation Italy always was to the Romanian author. Another aspect justifying our choice is the fact that several personalities Eliade considered as his spiritual mentors were also the teachers and spiritual mentors of Ernesto de Martino. Much more, a shorten condensed fragment of this particular subchapter, was published by the author of the thesis under the title *Ernesto de Martino, Mircea Eliade și mentorii lor spirituali*, in the collective works *Viziuni critice*, (coord. G. Cormoș, ed. Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca 2010, pp.9-15).

The chapter ends with some brief comments regarding Ernesto de Martino's friendship with one of the most outstanding political figures of the age, Pietro Secchia, head of the Italian Communist Party. By placing such considerations at the end of the chapter we meant to insure a fluent link to the thematic of the next chapter, thus conferring fluidity to the text as a whole.

*Chapter III* of Part I, *Ernesto de Martino, an Unusual Political Figure*, illustrates the Italian author as a complex and controversial political figure. By making use of previous interviews and testimonies of De Martino's friends and disciples, we have tried to prove the Italian author's honest passion with which he engaged into the political life of his age. Although he often changed political colour as well as several party memberships, attitude which is really not unusual for an Italian, De Martino remained constant in spirit, political thought and political fight. He saw politics in terms of culture and developed a unique, pro-European vision, that of a laic religion of freedom.

One of the subchapters here revisits, partially critically partially ironically, the theme of the ideological split between De Martino and Benedetto Croce. Formed at Croce's school, our anthropologist became the creator of an independent system of thinking, philosophical and scientific, as well as a method of efficient training of future researchers.

The chapter bears a particular importance in the economy of the entire paper, hinting at a first moment of originality in interpretation. Thus we have tried to prove the pro-European character of De Martino's vision, prior to the beginnings of the European Union. Should he have lived to know it as we live it today, certainly he would have considered it a true Republic of Free Nations. Both the discovery and the demonstration to the hypothesis of considering De Martino a pro-European before the

concept of European construct even existed is entirely our own, representing one of the most important original contributions to the specialized literature. No other biographical volume or author has analysed more or less explicitly this trait of the Italian anthropologist. Revisiting the classical discussion upon the decadence of the European societies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, De Martino reshapes the theory of a revival of Europe, by the voracity and political innocence of the masses, so common in the debates of the age, into the frame of a new identity, taking the form of a European citizenship, similar to that which represents the common ground of identification within the nowadays European construct. Then, in De Martino's vision, the same as now, such identity finds origins, sustainment and basis in the same historical heritage, common principles and cannons.

We retain necessary to specify that this chapter generated two articles: the first one, participant in 2009 at the International Conference "A Decade and a Half of European Studies and Business Administration at Cluj", published January 2010, under the title „*Ernesto de Martino. A European Perspective in Italy at the Mid of the XX<sup>th</sup> Century*”, in *Studia Europea Review*; the second one, bearing the title „*Ernesto de Martino și «barbarizarea» Europei (Ernesto de Martino and the “imbarbarimento” of Europe)*”, appeared a few days ago in no. 6 of *Europa Review*, edited in Novi Sad Serbia.

*Chapter IV* of Part I, *Ernesto de Martino and the Ethnographic Research*, details the ethnographic research of our author. We have tried to illustrate both the classical method he acquired at the Italian school of demo-ethnographic studies, as well as the way he modified and revolutionized it, by the experience of the foreign the approaches he studied. We also highlighted De Martino's attempts in which regards the promotion of the Italian folklore as scientific category, with a history and life of its own, worthy of being reconsidered by the Italian historiography. Thus he brings the ethnological study, marginalized by the academic elites of the age, to the statute of science of the people, so praised nowadays.

We have captured and illustrated De Martino's innovative spirit in the height of his creation. The contemporary public shall be surprised by the passion with which he chooses, prepares, trains and coordinates his field research teams, as well as by the way he organizes the stages of each research in the most minute details. Each field



research is put to use and fructified extensively, since De Martino uses without reserve all the technological means offered by the modern century he lived in.

Besides the great number of articles in which he constantly publishes the preliminary results of his and his collaborator's work, our anthropologist organizes cultural shows on the radio, intended to promote to the masses the beauty of traditional culture, thus enhancing its value. The on air emissions were also meant as means of educating the masses. Innovation difficultly accepted by the Italian academic elites, the use of photography as ethnographic document, was introduced by De Martino as scientific proof of word illustrated analysis. The intuitive way by which the Italian anthropologist chooses his collaborators, photographers and documentary film directors, as well as the technical team, is really surprising, marking the first step in the development of Italian modern ethnology and anthropology of the visual.

As a plus to the above mentioned, besides the illustrative purpose of highlighting De Martino's results, the chapter brings important interpretations and original comments of the institutional and situational frame, in which the anthropologist performed his research. We contribute with pertinent comments to the analysis of the way his attempts were received, both at the level of the masses and at an academic level. Much more, we contribute with interpretations of the utmost importance and value of the materials gathered and offered to the Italian media of his age. Based on his discoveries, we succeeded to structure a case study, focusing on the situation and on the statute of the Italian peasant of the South, blamed and accused by the society of North Italy for the archaic stage of primitiveness and misery in which they lived at the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The situation of the conflict between Southern Italy and Northern Italy in terms of culture and traditions little changed up to present days, even if the "archaic folklore" factor was almost entirely eliminated. Our interpretation generated a paper, entitled "Family duty and clerical obligations. The financial status of the South Italy peasants at the mid of the XX century (1949-1960 cca.), participant in the International Symposium „Labour, Money, Banks, Culture and Politics (18 Century-2009)", organized by Univ. Prof. PhD Mihai Drecin and the University of Oradea, at the end of October 2009.

Another important moment of this chapter is represented by the subchapter entitled *Ernesto de Martino and the Romanian Lesson*, which brings additional information to a small fragment of the methodological introduction of Clara Gallini to

De Martino's volume *Morte e pianto rituale*. Dal lamento funebre antico al pianto di Maria. Our conclusions in the matter were presented in 2008 to a mix public -Italian and Romanian- in the occasion of an international meeting, meant to prove the continuous partnership and collaboration, before and after the fatidic moment 1989, in which regards scientific, artistic and economic aspects, organized by „Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava.

The scientific relevance of Ernesto de Martino's contact with the direct descendents of the Romanian Sociological School from the Romanian Institute of Folklore, occurring for the extent of a month in 1955, in the institutional frame of the Ministry of Culture, marks profoundly the scientific approach of the ethnological terrains after the visit to Romania. Although we have partially repeated the information in the Italian bibliography, our interventions, materialized in comments of basic methodological aspects in which De Martino found inspiration, such as the observation notes studied within the Romanian Institution, bring new glimpses of originality. Our interpretative incursion and the arguments we bring to the subject, motivates our assumption that the Italian anthropologist benefitted of a real methodological and practical lesson in which regards the elaboration of questionnaires, transcribing observation notes, approaching subjects and performing interviews.

The final subchapter of chapter IV, meant as a conclusion to the first part of the thesis, spots the multiple facets of De Martino's personality, insuring also a link and a justification for the second part of the thesis.

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**PART II** of the thesis, entitled *Cultural heritage, Theories on Myth and Case Studies in Romania and Italy*, constitutes the theoretic, analytical and interpretative frame of the thesis. Structured on three main themes, subject of the three large chapters and a smaller final one, this section of the thesis focuses the historical framework of the problematic of studying myths. Myth becomes a *linking concept* between cultural heritage and traditional culture. Cultural heritage is understood in a double perspective, the specifically narrowed one, as national cultural patrimony, and the wider, more generalized one, but giving space to building national identity and expressing national specificity, in a European and global context, the universal

patrimony. Traditional culture, comprehends all forms of folklore and traditional customs expressions and manifestations cultivated by modern society, both as documentary instruments meant for scientific and academic study and as artistic phenomena, promoting specificity in diversity, and pointing to the factor of the spectacular and to alternative purposes such as leisure and entertainment. In order to give balance to the thesis, both in which regards structure and essence of the studied subjects, we added a fourth conclusive chapter, which is meant to open perspectives to future research.

In the construction of the chapters we proceeded by generically defining the employed terminology and concepts. We then tried to frame the theoretical background and foundations which we considered essential for the set of comparative analyses and personal interpretations conferring originality to the thesis. We have also considered necessary to briefly present the historical frame of the hypotheses on which we base our scientific analyses and comparative approach, as well as the contributions of other authors upon the subject matter, previous to the present thesis.

In *Chapter I* of Part II, we considered necessary to specify the interpretative segment of cultural heritage which was later used in the last chapter of the thesis in order to highlight the strong national identity factor of the specifically national ethnological phenomena: the *căluș*, in which regards the Romanian traditional culture, and *tarantism*, in which regards the Italian traditional culture. We have also considered necessary to explain here the historical stratification of the third chapter premises, formulated initially by Mircea Eliade: the similitude between the two above mentioned ethnological phenomena: the *căluș* and *tarantism*. The historical consequences, from both a diachronic and synchronic perspective, of highlighting common roots in basis of the Latin origin of the two neo-Latin romance cultures, Romanian and Italian, were imperative for our analytical comparative construct. Only by taking seriously into account this aspect we shall be able to justify in a theoretical and practical way the verification and development of so similar ethnological phenomena, as well as their preservation in the remnant forms observable nowadays, on the territory of two ethnocultural areas so distant geographically speaking.

Due to the complex nature of the subjects raised in the second segment of the chapter, we have chosen to simply catalogue the scientific loci able to bring theoretical justification to the last comparative chapter. Our option to limit the

explanatory exposition to the most representative pieces is motivated by the large amount of specialized literature in the subject matter. Should we have opted to go into detail, we would have obtained a self sustaining synthesis, partially completed by the author of the thesis in one of the compulsory papers required by the second stage of the doctoral school, previous to the thesis itself. The aspects here raised remain as future projects of syntheses, constituting the results of a more in depth specific research.

A problem rather difficultly solved was finding a way to accommodate specialized terms, used by the specific literature of both cultural environments, diachronically speaking. That is why we have attempted to clarify the terminology we used in the second part of the thesis, enriching the terms with the meaning we meant to give them in our scientific approach.

*Chapter II of Part II, Theories and Theoreticians of Myth in Romania and Italy. Myth and Mythology*, was the subject of the first compulsory paper of the doctoral stage, being already partially published under the title “Cercetările române și italiene asupra mitului și mitologiei”, in the collective works *Alternative antropologice și etnologice in cercetarea culturilor*, (coord. Ion Cuceu), Cluj-Napoca, Editura Fundația pentru Studii Europene, 2007, pp. 351-366.

The chapter highlights the main European trends, in which regards the study of myth and mythology. Our intent was to identify the most important theoreticians in the domain, as well as the most important articles, studies and volumes dedicated to myth, conceived in the Italian and in the Romanian academic environment. We have taken into consideration only the most important authors who studied myth and mythology. In which regards the Romanian specialized literature of the domain, we have briefly taken into consideration the deconstruction and reclassification of the concepts of myth and mythology, so brilliantly realized by the Romanian philosopher Lucian Blaga. Out of the European theoreticians of myth we have considered Roland Barthes, for his schematized interpretation of the linguistic theory of myth. In which regards the Italian specialized literature, we have tried to illustrate in a chronological progression the theories conceived by Ernesto de Martino, born out of the constant deconstruction he performed upon the theories of myth, incessantly revisited in the purpose of developing and improving his own cultural theories.

We have also considered useful to underline, once more, the theoretical crossing of De Martino's ideas with Italian and Romanian theoreticians of myth, such as Benedetto Croce, Cesare Pavese and, last but not least, Mircea Eliade. The revisiting of the relationships established between De Martino and Eliade does not repeat the more formal information provided into part I of the thesis. The profoundly theoretical nature of part II necessitated the theoretical and comparative approach of the exchange of ideas between the two notable intellectuals of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Another important part of the chapter is the interpretation we have given to the binomial structures *myth-rite*, *myth-ritual*, used by the Italian anthropologist, in his theoretical and analytic works. An original contribution is our reinterpretation of De Martino's *mito-rito* theory, in which the author seldom uses the term rite instead of the term ritual. We bring a third note of originality by over posing De Martino's *mito-rito* theory upon the linguistic interpretation of myth realized by Roland Barth.

In order to complete the historical frame of the theory of myth, as well as the comments and comparative notes of the author regarding De Martino's theories, we underline the minute bibliography organized in subchapters 5, 6, and 7, of the present chapter. Without affirming the exhaustiveness of the bibliographical lists illustrated here, we have in project to detail the problem in .a future more specific study.

*Chapter III* of Part II, entitled *The Tarantula and the Căluș. Common Roots or Versions of Similar Rituals?*, represents the applicative and practical section of the thesis. A much less extended version of the chapter was already published in the collective works of the International Conference *Omul și Mitul/Mankind and Myth*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, May 2009, Faculty of Letters, "Ștefan cel Mare" University of Suceava, ROF, Suceava, 2009, pp. 347-360. The chapter focuses a comparative approach, the first of the kind, of the two mythical symbols, the *tarantula*, mark of the Italian phenomenon of *tarantism*, and the *căluș*, insignia of the Romanian custom bearing the same name. We have taken into consideration the historical and ethnographical forms of manifestation of the two rituals, the conditions and the reasons of their existence, the remnant forms and their transition to the nowadays versions of artistic manifestations. The historical comparison of the theories regarding the origins of the two customs unveils surprising similarities, positively justifying the hypotheses taken into consideration *ab initio*. If in the case of the *căluș* phenomenon the richness of the specialized bibliography allowed as to quote the opinions of more generations of

researchers, in which regards the phenomenon of *tarantism* we have concluded best to discuss only the most important authority of the field, Ernesto de Martino's conclusions. A deeper investigation of the studies regarding *tarantism* would have excessively complicated the well going of our research. On the other hand, De Martino's work is considered to be the reference in the domain. In fact, it is still being used as the reference point and as the base and frame for future research in Italy.

Another reason which determined us to consider only the variant of *tarantism* studied and commented by the Italian anthropologist is that, paradoxically, the reference field research of the *căluș* in Romania, the one which is the most quoted by the researchers and commentators of the *căluș*, took place in 1958, just a year before De Martino's investigations on *tarantism*. This may well be considered just a fortunate coincidence, despite the declared interest of De Martino in the Romanian folklore. Nevertheless, we must admit that despite the direct and confessed contact of De Martino with the Romanian ethnological and ethnographical research, there remained no proof of further correspondence between Mihai Pop, vice president of the Romanian Institute of Folklore, and coordinator of the 1958 field research, and the Italian anthropologist. Thus, for lack of proving data, we were unable to comment upon a possible influence in which regards the coincidence of approach of similar subject between the Romanian and Italian research space.

Structured in more subchapters, the comparison between *tarantism* and the *căluș* passes through an apparently intermediate stage, an ethnographic phenomenon registered in the Walachian communities from along the Timoc Valley. We are talking about the phenomenon of the *fall of the Rusalii*, which was interpreted as origin or archaic variant of the Romanian *căluș*. We have tried to offer to the reader a complex comparative and critical analysis, staged in various levels of interpretation. Far from considering our investigation ad exhaustive, we sustain the importance of such research, as well as the positive surprising results, which made us determine the determinant factors channelling the preservation of similar moments of ritual in areas geographically so remote and culturally so different.

Our attempt did not limit the comparative analysis only on one aspect of the two (respectively three) ethnologic phenomena, the way other previous studies, quoted in the chapter, have partially done so far. Our initial purpose was to emphasize on the multitude of similarities and points of contact between these phenomena in their recurrent mythical development, both synchronic and diachronic. But soon we

realized the importance of tracing and illustrating the structural and conceptual differences as well. Our approach in which this chapter is regarded was rather more historical and anthropological, or anthropological interpretative, than ethnological in nature. We were also interested in a comparative approach of the gender tensions developing within the studied phenomena. In this regard, we have used studies focusing on the research of the tensions developing between masculine and feminine, separately for the case of the *căluș* and for the case of *tarantism*, without though succeeding in reaching the depth of a comparative dimension. Therefore, some of the aspects we evidenced mainly in the conclusive subchapters redirect our interpretation towards a cultural anthropology methodology and approach, observing the multiple consequent stratification of mythological systems and complexes, generating some forms of collective imaginary, which, in their turn, condition spiritually, but also physically the human being.

In *Chapter IV*, which concludes Part II of the thesis, we have tried to shed light on the question of preserving some ethnologic phenomena meant to disappear in the process of evolution and modernization of the rural space. We have tried to spot and bring arguments to the tendency of modern contemporary society to safeguard mythical instances, in the hope of a *revival* of cultural heritage as generator of national, respectively regional identity. Although the specialized literature in the field offers a relatively large number of articles and volumes which focus upon the question of the transformation of the genuine phenomenon of the *căluș* in artistic expression of the spectacular, by modifying the traditional formula into a staged conditioned artificial representation, we considered imperative to at least introduce a comparative approach to a similar transformation and transition noticed in the case of the *tarantula bite* moment of *tarantism*. Thus, we have tried to highlight a similar tendency of transition of a traditional custom into a modern artistic expression, in the passage from genuine spontaneous folk custom to organized and typified Folk Festival stage transpositions, both in the case of the *căluș* and in the case of *tarantism*. From this perspective, the sacred and mythical facets of both ethnographic phenomena are lost in favour of the fundamental function of the spectacular: entertainment. Nevertheless, at the same time it saves, more in the case of *tarantism*, it's true, the negative interpretation impressed on the rural feeling of sacredness, aesthetics and imaginary by the passing of ages.

The emergence of the *La notte della taranta* Festivals is relatively recent in Italy, first documentations appearing after the year 1999. Nevertheless, the process of transformation from ethnologic phenomenon to artistic phenomenon is similar to both the *căluș* and *tarantism*, the same as *artistic* and *cultural tourism*<sup>3</sup> they generate nowadays. However, this tardy conversion of *tarantism* into dramatic choreographic form, confirms and justifies the double, even triple existence of the Romanian phenomenon as artistic manifestation, as tradition of a still performed magical ritual, preserved and studied by ethnologic and anthropologic means and, at the same time, as still vivid folk tradition, performed in the spirit of its primordial functions: defence, purification, initiation and fertilization. This is the reason for which the Romanian *Căluș* became a passport of the Romanian national cultural patrimony and an “identity symbol” of the Romanian kin everywhere in the world, being also included on the UNESCO list of the intangible universal patrimony.

## METHODOLOGY

The analysis of such a complex character such as that of Ernesto de Martino, with cultural, social, academic and political interests, could never develop linearly. The innate as well as studied interdisciplinary method of the anthropologist has guided our research to the same richness of trans-disciplinary studies. Thus we borrowed methodology of research from multiple domains. We have tried to follow the scientific lesson of the studied author, by adding even to the monographic part, describing Ernesto de Martino’s biography, the most complete and up to date, as far as we know, chapters and paragraphs in which we intervene with critics and personal observations and comments. Thus, we hope to have added a plus of originality to the monographic part of the thesis.

Our scientific investigation required two self-financed research voyages in Italy. Unfortunately for financial and technical reasons, all expenses being covered entirely from our modest financial resources, we could not prolong our permanence in Italy for more than ten days, each time. The first voyage to Italy took place in the month of July 2006. The preliminary incursion into the Italian territory, namely the eastern side of Sicily, resulted into promises of important documentary material,

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<sup>3</sup> Terms defined by the author in Chapter I of the second part of the Thesis.



useful discussions with several third-age informers, which allowed us to frame the project of future research, and the acquisition of important bibliography for the general frame of the thesis. Our scope of finding and registering genuine traditional culture phenomena, in the already modern landscape of Sicily, turned into complete failure. Still, the folk memory of the elders we have talked to has given us enough reasons and motivation to continue our investigation in which regards parallelisms between the Romanian and the Italian traditional cultures. Much more, we have succeeded to purchase classical materials and collections of Italian folklore, especially the volumes written by the ethnologist Giuseppe Pitrè. A year later, in September 2007, we returned to Italy, this time aiming for the institutional frame of the capital. Our purpose was to research libraries and archives of profile, in order to acquire a more specific bibliography, as well as to meet Italian specialists in the domain of anthropology and ethnology. Time limitation, bureaucracy created difficulties to access information as well as conjuncture discrepancies have conditioned our return to Romania with a large amount of bibliographic material, but quite insufficient for the completion of the main monographic chapter. Documents and bibliographic materials of utmost importance have been sent to us, partially by post, partially in digitalized form along 2008. The belated reception of such materials generated an uninterrupted series of unexpected delays, unwanted by the author of the thesis.

Nevertheless, the second visit to Italy meant not only acquiring an important bibliographic material but also the preliminary framing of a series of studies, integrant part of some of the capital chapters of the thesis, which were extremely relevant for the comparative and analytical part of the paper. Thus we have completed a case study based on a questionnaire, giving space to both qualitative and quantitative statistical analyses, focused on the problem of building national identity when confronted with the new identity building structures of the European construct, as well as the premises of a future study on the question of acquiring new identity within mixed marriages.

We have also met the occasion of interviewing members of an Italian Folk Dance group, mainly specialized in the *tarantella* dance, which, to our surprise, included the dramatic representation of artistic reproduction of the *tarantula bite* and *exorcism* moment, typical to the phenomenon of *tarantism*. Unfortunately technological defects prevented us from including the registered material into our

analysis. Even if such difficulties seemed to have been eliminated by the modern revolution in technology, in our case, the technological means of registration failed us, challenging, once more, our scientific research. The only proof of our field research in Rome remains the collection of photography, taken by dilettante photographers during the Festival *La notte della taranta* 2006, so generously shared by Miss. Concetta.

Although we intended to return in Italy, for a much more complex and prolonged team field research, in the purpose of studying the transformation of the phenomenon of *tarantism* into an artistic phenomenon of choreographic transposition of the *tarantula-bite exorcism* into the gay rhythms of the *tarantella* folk dance, lack of time and financial aids prevented us from accomplishing our project. That is why the final chapter of Part II reconsiders the latest data of the most recent Romanian field research in which regards the Căluș phenomenon, while as the comments regarding the dramatic insertion of the *tarantula-bite exorcism* into the *tarantella* forms of artistic expression is mainly based on digitalized materials. Once more our thesis lacks the practical validation of an up to date field research, to the detriment of the scientific quality per ensemble. Admitting the defect of having failed to provide viable practical validation to our hypotheses, we promise to return upon the subject in a more specific, detailed and complete future volume. We have already planned a field research project regarding the folk festival *La notte della taranta*.

Regarding the *fall of the Rusalii (căderea Rusaliilor)* phenomenon from Timoc Valley, we admit the importance of a field research in order to find scientific ground for validating that which the American sociologist Gail Kligman found by studying translated bibliographical material. Time and financial resources permitted, we propose to investigate the remnant cultural traditions of the Romanian Diaspora from Serbia. Unfortunately, for the moment such scientific investigation remains as a future project although we have already started preliminaries by identifying Serbian specialists in the domain, who could co-participate to such scientific attempt.

We admit the lacunas of both the author and the thesis in which regards the experience of a real field research, and hope that the future shall give us the possibility to put a remedy to the situation. Despite all this, we consider that the present structure of the thesis did not suffer much because of our admitted lack of field research experience. The nature of the present text, as well as the scientific approach we have chosen, require rather a complex understanding and a positive

interpretation of the bibliography upon the subjects matter, resulting in analytic commentaries and not necessarily a practical validation of hypothesis. We consider that the already existent scientific instruments employed by us to the finalization of the thesis, scarcely used to the fullest by previous scientific investigations of the kind, give us enough validation for the conclusions reached.

One of the main problems and major difficulty we constantly faced in our attempts to bring documentary proof to the permanence of the Italian anthropologist in Romania was the constant delay caused either by bureaucracy or by the strange disappearance of registered institutional documents from about the year 1955. Thus, although the Italian bibliography continuously signalled De Martino's visit on the territory of Romania, in the purpose of researching Romanian folk customs, regarding the funeral practices, as well as the forms of the Romanian *bocet*, we did not succeed to find proof of his presence in Romania in 1955. Despite the historically proven fact that the Romanian Security closely followed any foreign person crossing the Romanian borders in that period, the traces of Ernesto de Martino's visit to Romania disappeared completely. The only proof we were able to add to the Italian information is represented by the CNSAS answer, reproduced in Annex 2. Given the fact that the Romanian researchers who could have directly met Ernesto de Martino, in his visit to our country, disappeared unfortunately from the world of the living, the author did not have the chance or the honour to perform validating interviews.

Despite all these difficulties, our PhD Thesis remains an extremely useful first attempt to present to the Romanian public the complex personality of Ernesto de Martino, who is currently considered to be the father of Modern Italian Anthropology. Although as far as we know there have been some previous feeble attempts to translate De Martino's works into Romanian, none of his volumes appeared in Romanian so far. The name and work of the Italian anthropologist, researcher and author is still barely familiar to the Romanian specialists in the field. We hope that our attempts, finalized in the present PhD Thesis, shall make De Martino's name popular enough in order for his volumes to be considered worthy of being translated into Romanian.

## CONCLUSIONS

Anthropologist Ernesto de Martino's destiny, harsh and tortuous, presents him as a character bearing a continuous strife and battle for social, financial, intellectual, academic and biologic survival. Atheist from the Marxist perspective of the term, De Martino experiences the revelation of God in its apocalyptic dimension. Barely making it alive out of a difficult assault and bombardment during World War II, our anthropologist dies, failed by his own body, in a personal apocalypse which portrays the philosophical one he meant to depict in his last, remained unfinished, unfortunately, book.

The multiple facets of his personality, ethnologist, anthropologist, historian of religions, researcher, philologist and philosopher, political figure and active promoter of culture, translator, professor and trainer, pioneer and innovator in research methodology, picture De Martino as a unique exponent of a small tentative of 20<sup>th</sup> century *homo universalis*.

Since he always had a pro-European vision and a spiritual perspective pro-European construct, identity and citizenship, De Martino was often contested because of his political passion, perspiring ideals which were not quite foreign to the age, but surely tedious and badly received by the intellectual context of his time. Fully aware of his social and intellectual role as local political leader, always active socially and culturally and continuously changing political colour, he never altered his thought, faith and vision more than the natural aging and intellectual maturity could have. Thus, De Martino becomes a victim of his own complexity.

His constant wish to accomplish a history of the Cultural South, more or less politically conditioned, continued, paradoxically, the same idea of his youth fascist years, deprived from the violent connotations that the theory or *imbarbarimento* of Europe contained. De Martino proposes a balancing of the distance between *high culture* and *low culture* by means of putting to use the historical, philosophical and moral facets of folklore and archaic traditional society of South Italy. His attempt was double, functioning both in a *up-down*, and in a *down-up* direction. By his political militancy and propaganda of the culture of the elites amongst the masses, De Martino promotes a real ideological program of mass divulgation of culture. By his articles

and volumes, as well as by the audio and visual materials he diffused in cultural radio shows, by the scientific help he gave to the first documentary films' directors, De Martino upgrades a segment of an archaic society, living, although at another level on the evolution scale, parallel times with the contemporary reality. Thus he manages, little by little, to change the obtuse and sub-evaluative perspective of the elites upon the study of folklore.

De Martino's work, complex and minute, his texts thick with pertinent information, demonstration and arguments, have often generated a polemic reaction. He was literally "buried" academically but not intellectually, he was silenced politically but not scientifically. His ethnographic research and the works it generated are nowadays an *exemplum*, necessary and useful to any student in ethnology, anthropology, sociology, psychology, political science, translation, of our time. Thus we considered the capital importance of the *revival* that his personality and work knew in the last twenty years. It was high time for De Martino to be rediscovered, revisited and analysed, and most importantly, published, since important pieces of his thought remained in manuscript because of his so rapid departure from the living.

In a recent debate upon Ernesto de Martino's personality, someone asked: "How come a communist could have ever had an anthropological vision?" in the attempt of giving a pertinent answer to this question, we find ourselves compelled to underline, once more, that political ideology, political thought and the practical interpretations of pure political ideology are very different things. First of all, having „a party membership card (carnet de partid)" has never meant and still does not mean a complete embrace of imposed political/social interpretation of an ideology. Not so long ago, in Romania, such membership to the Romanian Communist Party, as well as patriotic work that in school we were all compelled to perform with "pride" and out of "ecologic spirit", meant an adaptation to the requirements of the age and to the requirements of an interpretation to a political doctrine. The ones refusing to conform to such "uniformity" were, on the other hand, the ones who assumed responsibility for their choice and thus willing to accept, sometime really harsh, consequences.

This is not entirely the case of De Martino, who acted out of personal belief. However, we should not forget the fact that the Italian anthropologist lived in a period of profound historical, social, political, ideological, economic, technologic and spiritual mutations, occurring not only locally, in the case of Italy, but globally. Such mutations determined the development of many notable personalities, which are

praised today despite their political orientation. Among De Martino's contemporaries, in the Romanian society, we mention only a few examples: Mihai Pop, Alexandru Amzulescu, Dumitru Pop, Ion Taloş, etc.

As we have stated in the chapter dedicated to the subject, De Martino remained loyal to his humane beliefs. The engine motivating his entire existence, personal, political or scientific alike was since the beginning the vision and feeling of a world in mutation. It, in De Martino's perspective upon the situation at the mid of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was marked neither by evolution nor by involution. In fact the problem here raised should not be judged in evolutionist or "involutionist" perspectives. Mid 20<sup>th</sup> century meant a period of acute crisis, which generated in the inherent changes which were to follow: an implosion of interpretations to an already existent ideology, basically "utopia derivative" and idealistic in nature.

The same as an entire generation of notable personalities, the same as the new world born out of the ashes of the old one, Ernesto de Martino was himself, all long his life, in a continuous process of change and adaptation to the new around him. He himself often created the grounds for the new, as we are to discover from his ethnological work, and then, from the publication of his last, philosophical-anthropological manuscript, *La fine del mondo*. His political militancy, the same as his field research, meant a means of approaching and helping the social strata which were soon to change the "cultural" face of Europe. His belief in a social Europe was shared by various left-wing anthropologists. His militancy translated in an cultural approach to the "disconsidered" socially and culturally masses, to which he gave his entire help for bringing education and cultural and ideological growth, based on the inner structures of his ingenuous spirit.

On the other hand, De Martino's adherence to the ideology of the Italian Communist Party was spiritually conditioned. As we have stated in the monographic part of the thesis, his last consort, Vittoria de Palma, was active in the structures of the Communist Party long before De Martino requested the membership. On the other hand, some of the barriers he systematically confronted determined an informal departure of De Martino from amidst the communist environment towards the end of his life. Despite the confessions of some members of his research, given in a complete ignorance of the proven fact, the ethnographic terrains were often financially and humanely sustained within the ICP. More than once, local party members facilitated

access of the team to information, informers and subjects, providing means of access to the desired locations.

Ernesto de Martino was always an independent spirit, refusing uniformity and conformity. The communists declared him a “heretic” of the Marxist theses. Consequently he was marginalized. The christian-democratic academic elites considered him a constant perpetrator of left-wing political propaganda. Thus he was always kept away, scientifically and intellectually, from the rightly place he deserved within the Italian University. But a surprising confession, of one of his disciples, upon De Martino’s personality and passion for both politics and scientific ideals, sheds clarifying light upon the above inserted question. Risking to repeat a note, which can easily be passed by, but is of extreme importance, we transcribe fragments of a *pro memoria* Ernesto de Martino conversation, registered March 1969. Main characters of the debate: Giuseppe Pescarini, Carola Fabbri, Cesare Bermani and Franco Coggiola.

*[...] homo universalis in terms of culture [...] he was a true democrat, we have to admit it<sup>4</sup>*

We have to mention also, that his generation considered De Martino to be a first class ethnologist and, maybe, an unusual historian of religions. The essence of his studies was interpreted as a philosophy of ethnology. Only the last two or three decades, revisiting his work, considered him to be the Father of Modern Italian Anthropology and complex demo-ethno-anthropologic studies, to which he brought important palpable reform. This was partially due to the terminological “revolution” of Italian ethnological studies, which occurred thanks to De Martino’s work. With him, the history of ethnological and anthropological studies in Italy knew a new methodological orientation, but also kept the due respect for the traditional approach signed by the work of the classical ethnologist Giuseppe Pitré.

Ernesto de Martino is a fierce researcher of myth as well, contrasting theoretically Eliade’s theories, hypotheses and premises. Nevertheless, his theoretical approach can be validated only in the measure in which it sustains itself by contrast with that of Eliade, since it is basically built on the reinterpretation of the Romanian historian of religions faults and defects of interpretation. De Martino holds

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<sup>4</sup> “aveva una cultura universale [...] Era un vero democratico, bisogna dirlo”, confession about De Martino from around 1945-1951, “*Era un vero democratico*” in “*Il de Martino*”, *Tra furore e valore: Ernesto de Martino*, (coord. C. Bermani), p. 102.

inestimable merits in which regards the theory of myth, based on the binomial structure *myth-ritual*, a true paradigm of the *crisis of presence* and, at the same time, its resolution in the *apocalypse of non presence*, explained by the individual dissolution into history. Although he deals with myth, our anthropologist is not a mythologist, nor a “researcher of mythologies”. Perfectly framed from this point of view in Italian scholasticism, De Martino studies myths and mythologies within the Italian *traditional culture*. Since from this perspective the Italian myths are mainly those of South Italy, recognised as such by socio-anthropologists and historians of religions alike, they insure the research context of *traditional culture* of subaltern masses. De Martino’s perspective of approaching the Cultural South and not the geographical one insured the possibility to enhance and complete his study of Italian *traditional culture* with parallelisms to other South European cultural traditions. Thus he managed to underline reminisces of a long forgotten sacredness, that of the real ancient Europe, which, in fact, geographically coincides with the nowadays Cultural South.

The most important aspects of De Martino’s research, for Romania as well as for the economy of the present thesis, are the ones identified in the analysis of the *bocet* and Romanian customs and traditions regarding the funeral, but also his study in *tarantism*. The polemics illustrated by the thesis in which regards the direct and indirect contacts between De Martino and Eliade, did not stop the later from praising De Martino’s work, by highlighting an important cultural intuition; that of the similarities of the Romanian phenomena of the *căluș* and the Italian one of *tarantism*. This first hypothesis, announced by the Romanian historian of religions<sup>5</sup> a few years from the passing into eternity of De Martino, still raises the curiosity of researchers in the domain. The discovery of the similarities was occasioned through the existence of an ecstatic phenomenon, close to the Romanian *căluș*, which recalled the *fall of the tarantati*. The phenomenon we are referring to is the cataleptic *fall of the Rusalii*<sup>6</sup>,

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<sup>5</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Șamanism la Români?*, “Căderea Rusaliiilor”, in *De la Zalmoxis la Gengis-Han*, translated by Ivănescu M. and Ivănescu C., București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1980, pp. 203-204.

<sup>6</sup> a.n. According to the quite superficial and incomplete descriptions of field research notes which were preserved in archives, the phenomenon of *the fall of the Rusalii* (*căderea Rusaliiilor*) seems to be rather more similar to the *tarantati* phenomenon the way De Martino described it at the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Contrary to all expectations, the more archaic manifestations of *tarantism* seem to be more close to the Romania folk ritual the *Căluș*.



similar to the struck by the *căluș* phenomenon, which was registered at the Romanian communities on Timoc Valley, along the border between Serbia and Bulgaria.

The comparative analysis of the Walachian and the Romanian rituals was performed by sociologist<sup>7</sup>, a decade from Eliade's observation, in a study resulted from a field research accomplished at the end of the '70s. More recently, other notable European ethnologists and anthropologists registered studies on the similarities between the two ethnological phenomena, *tarantism* and the *struck by the căluș*. Anthropologist Marianne Mesnil, regards the two phenomena in the perspective of the dance therapy applied to the female cases of insanity in traditional customs, associated with sorcery as alternative to heresy. The Italian anthropologist Giovanni Pizza<sup>8</sup>, starts on the traces of Mrs. Mesnil, studying the female hypostases of female witchcraft in the rural space, and the relationship virginity-bite-crisis, thus revisiting also Eliade's hypothesis. Another researcher, mentioning briefly the similarities between the *căluș* and *tarantism*, is PhD Ileana Benga<sup>9</sup>, from the Institute of Folklore, Cluj-Napoca.

What determined us to revisit Mircea Eliade's hypothesis is the fact that the subject did not benefit so far of a complete and detailed comparative analysis. In the present thesis, the author has tried to capture in detail the comparison of the complexity of the two phenomena, inscribing them into the mythical space of some archaic European mythological complexes. We were motivated in our comparative approach by the real scientific challenge of tracing contact and contrast points between the two ethnological phenomena. A glimpse of originality brought by the author is represented by the parallelism identified in conjuncture to the subject of the chapter, of to other ethnological Serbian-Romanian phenomena, the *Mătcălău* and the *fall of the Rusalii*. Such phenomena could develop important *pro* arguments to the enclosure of the Balkans space to De Martino's concept of Cultural South, similarly

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<sup>7</sup> Gail Kligman, *Călușul, transformări simbolice în ritualul românesc*, Chapter II, "Contexte comparativ – istorice", „Colecția Excellens”, București, Univers, 2000, pp. 90-91.

<sup>8</sup> Giovanni Pizza, „Șamanism, vrăjitorie, posesiune. O perspectivă comparată pornind de la cazul românesc”, in *Cercetarea antropologică în România. Perspective istorice și istoriografice* (coord. Cristina Papa, Giovanni Pizza, Filippo M. Zerilli), Ed. Clusium, 2004, pp. 92-98; „The Virgin and the Spider: Revisiting Spirit Possession In Southern Europe”, in *Incontri di Etnologia Europea* (coord. Cristina Papa, Giovanni Pizza, Filippo M. Zerilli), Ed. Scientifiche Italiane, 1998.

<sup>9</sup> Ileana Benga, „Dramaturgia aniversară – nod articular în transmiterea tradițională”, in *Călușul. Emblemă identitară*, (coord. Narcisa Alexandra Știucă), ed. Universității din București, 2009, p. 64-65, n. 18.

motivating also its deep organic and archaic roots in the civilisation of Ancient Europe.

Anthropologically speaking, the two rituals, the Italian one of the *tarantula* and the Romanian one of the *căluș*, allow a complex image of the multiple layers of mythical stratification, the similarities being: mythical, structural, of performance, of purpose and of resolution. We also are entitled to underline the stratification of the differences characterizing and individualizing each of the rituals, generating shades of the “local colour”. The relevant differences analysed in chapter III of part II of the thesis are due to the differences of environment, geographical landscape, local mythical stratification and influences, as well as to the different and specific social political and cultural conjunctures, and to the mingling of local beliefs and modern confessions (Catholicism vs. Orthodoxism).

Our hypothesis, to which we have attempted to bring proof and comparative analytical arguments, is that we are faced with two complexes of mythical stratification, which developed amazing similarities, though found at considerable geographical distance one from another. Due to recurrent historical contacts, in different historical ages, they blend, separated influenced each other along centuries, in different layers of their stratification. The two complexes of mythical and mythological stratification were transmitted, genetically and culturally, by means of the two rituals, orally and subliminally, from generation to generation, voicing to the new generations a series of behaviours and typologies of mental and physical manifestations, responding to a series of determined external stimuli, accidentally very similar in nature.

We must not ignore the common psychical reaction of the human being to frustration. Both cases of rituals taken under analysis present psychical and physical symptoms caused by reaction to different forms of frustration, sexually, socially or culturally driven. In fact, the *Tarantula* and its facets, as well as the *Iele* or the *Rusalii*, and the *Căluș* are nothing less than phantasmagorical images of frustrated souls. And again, we must not forget that the sacred emanations of ancient times have been interpreted and catalogued for centuries, both negatively and profanely under the title of heresy, and positively and in preservation spirit, as aesthetic spectacular phenomena.

If the methodological introduction focused mainly in spotting the author’s original contributions to the study of Ernesto de Martino’s personality, in typing the

conclusions to the thesis we considered imperative to specify the originality of the second part of the thesis as well. It apparently bears the image of a cumulus of different studies, but nevertheless it sustains itself as a whole.

The originality of the author resides in the approach she used, from theory to interpretation, from interpretation to analytic and comparative criticism. Thus, each constituent segment of the thesis becomes a *sine qua non* condition of an overall perception of the final product. Nevertheless, we were compelled to leave certain aspects, which we have only briefly presented along the chapters, as future projects meant to complete the puzzle proposed by the present thesis. Our main scope was to define and illustrate an interpretative paradigm of reconsideration of the ethnologic myth, from its genuine version to its modern mutation in an artistic form of manifestation.

Although the two constituent parts of the thesis are, apparently, independent texts, which, taken separately, do not seem to motivate one another neither in methodology and approach nor in subjects, the linking factor is the complex personality of De Martino itself. The lack of conjectural scientific interest for the Romanian ethnology and traditional culture, the absence of common spiritual and intellectual mentors, which facilitated the intellectual encounter of De Martino with Mircea Eliade, as well as their consequent occasional meetings, correspondence and debates upon myth, would have voided of meaning Eliade's assumption on the similarities between *tarantism* and *căluș*, as well as our comparative-interpretative approach.

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