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The Land of Remorse: A Study of Southern Italian Tarantism
(review)

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Italian Culture, Volume 23, 2005, pp. 181-183 (Review)

Published by Michigan State University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/itc.2006.0007>

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diario di un'estate felice trascorsa in una Toscana grecizzata con una Eleonora Duse che porta il nome della figlia di Elena di Troia, Ermione. Fra il Serchio e il Gombo vediamo balzare un fauno, un centauro lottare con il cervo, la driade Versilia uscire dal tronco di un pino, la ninfa Undulna seguire le curve dell'onda. Ma assistiamo anche al magico ingresso nel "non tempo" di una stagione mitica, come mostrano esemplarmente i ben noti versi della "Pioggia nel pineto".

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Ernesto De Martino. *The Land of Remorse: A Study of Southern Italian Tarantism*. Translated from Italian and annotated by Dorothy Louise Zinn, with a foreword by Vincent Crapanzano. London: Free Association, 2005. Pp. xxiii + 332.

This translation of De Martino's *La terra del rimorso: Contributo a una storia religiosa del Sud*, first published in 1961, may open up a surprising new world for many English readers who can now finally appreciate the work of one of the most important Italian thinkers of the past century: the Neapolitan anthropologist, ethnologist, philosopher, and engaged intellectual, Ernesto De Martino (1908–65).

Previously the only book by De Martino available in English was the out-of-print *Primitive Magic: The Psychic Powers of Shamans and Sorcerers*, a translation of *Il mondo magico: prolegomeni a una storia del magismo*. But aspects of De Martino's theories are discussed in two chapters—one written by the American anthropologist George Saunders, the other by Annalisa Di Nola—of Italy's "Southern Question": *Orientalism in One Country*, edited by Jane Schneider and published in 1998. For his part, Saunders since 1984 has promoted the study of De Martino's works, emphasizing that his historicist perspective would correct the excesses of behaviorism and functionalism, submitting the important entry on De Martino to the *International Dictionary of Anthropologists*, published in 1991. These publications notwithstanding, it is not an exaggeration to say that Anglophone culture has almost ignored De Martino. To date, De Martino's name remains unmentioned by such standard reference works as *Encyclopedia Britannica* or *Columbia Encyclopedia*.

This deficiency is an uncomfortable one for scholars of postwar Italian culture because many intellectuals, politicians, and cultural and political movements of present and past times might be better understood in the light

of the theories of De Martino. The philosopher Benedetto Croce, for example, was De Martino's true *maître à penser*, while Antonio Gramsci's notes on folklore were fundamental to the development of De Martino's thought. Giovanni Jervis, who was a member of the team that worked with De Martino for the research in Apulia on tarantism, and Carlo Tullio-Altan, who acknowledged his cultural debt to the Neapolitan thinker by calling him "my eldest brother," would be better studied in reference to De Martino, as would Vittorio Lanternari, Carlo Levi, and Pier Paolo Pasolini. Likewise, a serious analysis of De Martino's work would shed much light on such developments as literary and cinematographic neorealism, the Italian antipsychiatry movement, and the international debate that originated from clashes or dialogues between existentialism, historicism, structuralism, semiotics, Marxism, and psychoanalysis.

With regard to Italy, while the Italian public has always acknowledged the importance of De Martino's work, it is also important to recall that, because of the deep divisions between leftist and rightist ideologies, on the one hand, and regional differences, on the other, De Martino's studies were incorporated in cultural debates only with great difficulty. Suffice it to mention, for example, the difficulty of placing De Martino's historicism and *meridionalismo* between the idealism of Croce and the Marxism of Gramsci and others. Today, however, De Martino's work has definitively been placed at the center of discussion in Italy, where new editions of his books and studies on his innovative concepts of "crisis of presence" and "dehistorization" have been reissued. *La terra del rimorso*, a classic for courses of anthropology in Italian universities, was reprinted in 1994, 1996, and 2002. De Martino's keen analyses of symbolic relations between religion, values, ritual forms, mental diseases, and irrational violence provide, without doubt, crucial reflections for overcoming the alleged inevitability of clashes between civilizations, the eclecticism of cultural relativity, the overestimation of communitarian idealism, and the superficial conclusions that originated from the notion of Italy's amoral familism.

Therefore, the American translator of *The Land of Remorse*, Dorothy Zinn, who teaches anthropology at the University of Matera, deserves great praise as a cultural pioneer who shares the very same spirit of the author she has audaciously and brilliantly translated. Her annotations accurately introduce the English reader to the peculiar writing style of De Martino and to the terminological diversity involved in a theoretically and methodologically dense work such as *The Land of Remorse*. She has made every effort to be faithful to an Italian prose that aims to reconcile ontologically the schism between

human sciences and philosophy. Zinn's work has managed the arduous task of translating and explaining musical, psychiatric, and entomologic concepts as well as finding equivalencies for terms in Latin, Italian, Italian dialects, Greek, and German. She has also painstakingly searched for English translations of De Martino's frequent references and quotations. In short, she has opened a trail that allows many English readers to penetrate an almost unexplored area of Italian and interdisciplinary studies. With his foreword, Vincent Crapanzano, distinguished professor of comparative literature and anthropology at the City University of New York, appropriately indicates where this trail starts and may surprisingly lead, according to the interests of the reader.

In sum, the English translation of *La terra del rimorso* is an authentic cultural event. After this "tarantula bite," if I may reprise the title of one of De Martino's best-known works, many readers and scholars will anxiously await the translations of *Sud e magia*, *Morte e pianto rituale: Dal lamento funebre antico al pianto di Maria*, *Furore simbolo valore*, and at least some texts from the fascinating as well as monumental *La fine del mondo: Contributo all'analisi delle apocalissi culturali*.

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Stefano Luconi. *Little Italies e New Deal: La coalizione roosveltiana e il voto italo-americano a Filadelfia e Pittsburgh*. Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2002. Pp. 253.

Stefano Luconi is one of the leading experts on Italian American politics in both Italy and the United States. He has published many works in English, and has consistently presented excellent papers in English at meetings of the American Italian Historical Association, which were subsequently published in its *Proceedings* as well as in other venues in the United States and Italy, such as *The Italian-American Vote in Providence, Rhode Island, 1916–1948* (2004) and *La "diplomazia parallela": Il regime fascista e la mobilitazione politica degli italo-americani* (2000).

Little Italies e New Deal merits my strongest recommendation for inclusion in the growing library of first-rate works in the fields of Italian Americana, and otherwise American and ethnic studies. Luconi's impressive review of the relevant literature spans many different disciplines, such as history, sociology, and political science, as well as American studies. The way he skillfully employs newspaper and other archival materials brings many issues to life. Finally, his primary analyses of U.S. census and voting data adds a