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Little Italies e New Deal: La coalizione roosveltiana e il
voto italo-americano a Filadelfia e Pittsburgh (review)

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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

great deal to the confidence one can invest in his findings. In these many ways Luconi demonstrates a broad grasp not only of the materials themselves but of the multitude of methods necessary to create a solid, comprehensive analysis of a complex social reality. Such analysis is a model for others who are interested in understanding the evolution of ethnic voting patterns.

Luconi carefully and intensively conducted a comparative examination of the voting patterns of Americans of Italian heritage in Pennsylvania's major urban centers, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, from 1924 to 1954. During the course of his investigation, he discovered how and, more importantly, why some Italian Americans entered into coalitions with other ethnic minorities such as African Americans, as well as with economic interest groups like farmers and factory workers, to support Democratic presidential candidate Franklin Delano Roosevelt and, not incidentally, his New Deal. These ethnic and economic alliances were crafted during the Great Depression and also shortly after that period. Italian Americans became one of the most important electoral elements in the many-faceted coalition that brought Roosevelt into the White House following the 1932 presidential election. Italian Americans continued to serve in that capacity and helped Democrats to maintain control of the White House for several decades. These ethnic and class coalitions might appear to many contemporary political analysts to be strange bedfellows. In any case, these new cross-cutting connections made it possible for the Democratic Party to win. These kinds of coalitions also became the basis for realignments of both Democrats and Republicans. As a consequence, the two-party system would rest on these patterns for decades to come, lasting in fact until the electoral revolutions of the 1960s.

Luconi's work fills many important gaps in the study of ethnic voting in America. Despite its size and importance, the influence of the Italian American vote leading up to—and during—the radical transformations of the New Deal seems to have hardly been given the attention one would assume it deserved. This volume looks at the intricate role of individual Italian Americans as well as political, union, and social organizations and their relationship to both political parties, not only at the national level, but political “machines” at the crucial local level as well. Indeed, it is often the case that the facts on the ground, that is, at the local level, provide the best explanations for why Italian American political organizations and individual voters made their choices at the ballot box. Luconi's volume shows all this by focusing on the experience of the large Italian communities in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh between the 1924 national election and the Pennsylvania

gubernatorial election of 1954. These are not merely case studies but, as Luconi convincingly argues, are generally representative of Italian Americans throughout the country at that time.

During the course of his discussion, Luconi also considers most of the major theories of ethnic politics and electoral behavior in America, as well as other case studies of Democratic and Republican Party politics in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. He demonstrates how Italian American voters moved from the Republican Party in the late 1920s leftward to the Democratic Party by middle of the 1930s, which resulted in a solid majority for Roosevelt in the election of 1936. Another important issue analyzed by Luconi is the impact of World War II on the electoral behavior of Italian Americans. He also documents that Italian Americans became more active in politics when they decided to stay in the United States or, perhaps better stated, when they transformed from "immigrants" to "ethnics."

Yet, what is perhaps Luconi's most important contribution to the study of Italian American voting and political behavior is his discussion of how pragmatic Italian Americans had always been, and perhaps continue to be, in the choices they make in the voting booth. The key to this pragmatism is the maintenance of the Democratic Party majority in Pittsburgh, as opposed to the return of a Republican Party majority in Philadelphia after the end of the World War II. At the most local level in Philadelphia, Luconi shows that the "movement" toward the Democratic Party during the Depression was the result of the registration and mobilization of new voters by the party machine rather than a radical change of ideology.

I believe that Stefano Luconi describes the framework of Italian American electoral and political pragmatism best in his own words in (my liberal translation of) his final paragraph: "It was, moreover, really the differential capacity of the Democratic Party to continue to provide access to local patronage that would determine the redirection of electoral behavior in the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh communities in the years following the Second World War. In the first city the Republican Party was in position to recoup the majority of votes of the Italian American electorate because they were able to conserve a predominant portion of the municipal and county patronage. In Pittsburgh, however, the monopoly exercised by the Lawrence machine on local patronage assured that the Democratic Party would maintain control of the Italian American vote" (250).