

THE NEW LANGUAGE INVENTED BY  
ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS IN AMERICA

*contrattore* [contractor],

*tracca* [track],

*picco* [pick],

*grosseria* [grocery],

*bordante* [boarder].

*scaloppini* [it should be *scaloppine*] and *tailors of cotti* [coats].

*pezze* [pieces, meaning dollars],

*bosso* [boss] and

*olivetta* [elevated railroad].

*naise* [nice],

*ghella*

*shovel* became *sciabola* [in Italian it means saber] and the worker that uses it is a *sciabolatore* [in the sport of fencing *sciabolatore* is *sabreur*, a swordsman with a saber.]

*Elevated railways* became *olivetta* [little olive],

*tunnel* became *tonno* [tuna fish], later replaced by *tubo* [tube].

*Mulberry Street*, the center of New York's Little Italy became *Mòrbeda*, with obvious phonetic assonance with *morbida* [soft]. The town of Hoboken, in New Jersey, morphed into

*Obocchino*, resonant of *bocchino* [cigarette holder]. At the top of them all is

*Broccolino*, that transforms Brooklyn into a vegetable [small broccoli.]

*officer* that, converted into the immigrants' language, became *ufficiale*.

*coppetane* designates New York's *Uptown*. This, at least, is the Neapolitan version.

Sicilians say *oppitani*,

*giobbisti* [jobbers],

*pressatori* and *sottopressatori* [pressers, pressers' helpers],

*operatori* [operators] and

*sceperi* [garment shapers].

*mezzo-giovane*,

*mezzo-sciainatore*

*mezzo-barista*.

*farma*;

trolley is the *carro elettrico* [electric wagon] and

heat is *stima* [steam], whence the frequent and involuntarily ironic announcements about houses for sale *without stima*, i.e. without appreciable value.

*fruttistenne* [fruit stand]. At the same time words like *bar* and *barista*<sup>1</sup> are now commonly used in Italy.

Even the newly-arrived *grignollo* [green horn] knows them.

*canabulldog*. This word reproduces the Italian duplication in *cane bulldog* [dog bulldog].

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<sup>1</sup> Curiously, the word *barista*, an Italian neologism created on the root of the American word *bar*, has crossed the ocean in the opposite direction and is now used in the U.S. to identify a person working in an Italian-style coffee shop.

*pizza-pie*, which, translated into Italian, means *pizza-pizza*.

*“Non andare lì che spogli la grassa.”* [Meaning: Don’t go there or you will spoil the grass. Literal translation of *spogli la grassa*: you will undress the fat woman.]

*“Siedo in giardino e rido il buco.”* [Meaning: I sit in the backyard and I read a book. Literal translation of *rido il buco*: I laugh at the hole.]