

Announcing the Cicchetto as a Literary Form and Inviting Others to Submit their Cicchetti Here

Mary Cappello (April 28, 2008)



Announcing the first of three projects that I hope to pursue on I-Italy in the days ahead: to theorize and compose "cicchetti" together: a literary form in the tradition of the late afternoon snack.

In the interest of cutting through the logorhea produced by new information technologies, I write to announce a call to cicchetti makers--a new literary form that I hope we can inaugurate together. I



learned about cicchetti after making a visit to Venice in the Fall of 2006--a trip I made to attend the magnificent Giornate del Cinema Muto festival in Sacile. After which I wrote a piece on sound, sleep, violence, and silent cinema that appears in The Michigan Quarterly Review. (Already, I'm digressing, and producing more words than the world or I have time for.) I hadn't eaten any cicchetti in Venice, but only read of them after returning to the United States where I learned that the late afternoon snacks, imbibed with prosecco served in tiny glasses called "ombre" (clouds), constituted the authentic contemporary cuisine of the city. A foodstuff and ritual meeting that most tourists didn't know about or have immediate access to.

With the idea of the small snack, the afternoon musing in mind, with the idea of a writing that can meet the unmet needs of our times (how grand a claim!), I want to use this BLOG space to post cicchetti, to theorize about cicchetti, and to ask you to do the same.

Here are my first thoughts, toward distinguishing the literary form by way of its material counterpart:

Cicchetti: writing that is pitched to receive the divinations that spring from a break in the day.

Cicchetti: temporally, longer and mellower than a "coffee break."

Cicchetti: not a meal in itself; neither a prelude to a meal. Anticipatory, and yet not equivalent to antipasto. Needing nothing more or less.

Cicchetti: intimate. For the moment. Unnamed pleasures. Flights of fancy.

Cicchetti: a literature produced when one's blood sugar is at its lowest, and meant to treat same.

Cicchetti: a snack (need to do a lot more thinking about this curious entity)

Cicchetti: relative to Italian traditions of sleeping or at least drowsing, resting, meditating, or having sex after-noon, the time at which people in other parts of the world and in other cultures are drinking tea, ingesting stimulants, and hoping to wake themselves up

Is the singular of cicchetti, "cicchetto" or "cicchetta"? There seems to be some debate about it.

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