

Steve Siporin

EXCERPT FROM WAYLAND D. HAND PRIZE WINNER *THE BEFANA IS RETURNING: THE STORY OF A TUSCAN FESTIVAL*

CHAPTER FOUR

FOOD: THE INTOLERABLE TORMENT OF HUNGER

Our land is called poverty, where one does the dance of hunger.

—Lullaby from Apulia

La Befana è poverina
lèi non ha salciccia e pane
per i figli che hanno fame
va cercando da mangiar.

The Befana is poor.
She doesn't have sausage and bread
for her children who are hungry.
She is searching for something to eat.

—“La Befana”

Chronic hunger, a fact of everyday life for centuries, was one of the generating and sustaining forces behind the Befanata. Folklorist Nevia Grazzini considers the reciprocal exchange of song and other entertainment for food to be among the Befanata's oldest elements (1995, 25–26). Alessandro Sistri says that begging represents the nucleus of the entire ritual (1996, 36).¹ In fact, I could find no Befanata tradition, historical or contemporary, that did not dispense food, or at least drink, following a performance featuring song and sometimes a skit.

Preparation of the food to be shared with squad members requires a major effort on the part of the hosts. Before I observed a Befanata for the first time, I witnessed the loving, labor-intensive food prepara-

From *The Befana is Returning: The Story of a Tuscan Festival* by Steve Siporin. Reprinted by permission of the University of Wisconsin Press. © 2022 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. All rights reserved. Images have been omitted but can be found in the full book.

Siporin, Steve. 2023. “Excerpt from Wayland D. Hand Prize Winner *The Befana Is Rising: The Story of a Tuscan Festival*.” *TFH: The Journal of History and Folklore* 39 & 40: 88–119.

ration that is part of the custom. Three generations of women in one household—Elisa (mother and grandmother), Angela (daughter and mother), and Martina (daughter and granddaughter)—spent several days preparing food to be served (pizza, focaccia, sandwiches, and an array of cakes and tarts) as well as food packages to be carried away (including homemade sausages and wine). Over the course of the Epiphany eve that followed, seven groups totaling about 150 performers were fed by the Nizzis. Each group was also given a package of food to put in its basket when it left. Because the sausages and wine were products of the Nizzis' own land and labor, it could be said that their preparations had actually begun months earlier and had also involved Angela's husband, Roberto. One would have to multiply this kind of food preparation by the number of homes that host Befana squads on Epiphany eve to get a vision of what getting ready for the *gran festa* means in the Pitigliano countryside.

The amount of expense and effort undertaken by so many households might seem to indicate that food is the main point of the Befanata. Anthropologists of the school of Marvin Harris are likely to agree. Their functionalist, materialist approach emphasizes the "hard-nosed," practical economics behind a society's food culture, especially formal and informal rules of consumption (Harris 1985 [1996]). Befanata squads certainly appreciate good food and drink, and no doubt these refreshments fuel the exuberance and generosity of the evening. But it is hard to believe that the necessity and pleasure of food alone adequately explain its prominence in the Befanata; food's symbolic value is important, too. In contrast to Harris, anthropologists like Mary Douglas, her successors, and others emphasize the symbolic in their commentaries on culture-based eating behavior (Douglas 1966, 1975, 1997).² Both types of perspectives are needed to understand the food dimension of the Befanata because food is central to the event for both practical and symbolic reasons. I will address the practical aspects here and the symbolic aspects in depth mainly in chapter 8. But it is good to keep in mind that the material and the symbolic dimensions of food in the Befanata are not really separate because the symbolic meaning stems from the material hunger it subtly remembers.

NECESSITY AND DIGNITY

Lest anyone should think the food shared in the Befanata, even in the recent past, was *only* symbolic, it is worth noting that there was an unspoken rule, based on economic status, about who could join a squad. Angelo Biondi writes that in the Befanata of Montevitozzo (twelve miles north of Pitigliano), “the significance of the redistribution of goods through begging is extremely clear; actually, among the families that were well-off, sons were severely prohibited from going out to sing the Befana, which was reserved instead for the most needy” (1981, 69).³

The prohibition was not because the “well-off” families looked down on the custom but because the custom was reserved for the poor, those who really lacked eggs and meat and other foods. It was the *right* of the poor, as the language of their songs makes clear, to expect (and if necessary to demand) generous amounts of the most-valued foods. Ferretti writes that “a great deal of testimony, particularly from the Mount Amiata area [twenty-eight miles north of Pitigliano] speaks of the Befana squads as being formed from the poorest people, who couldn’t even allow themselves meat nor did they possess a pig to slaughter” (1981b, 24n21).⁴

The Befanata created a way they could receive needed food *in exchange* for entertainment, an equal exchange that preserved their dignity.⁵ The same principles applied to house visits: Befana squads avoided the homes of the poorest people not only because they didn’t have anything to offer in exchange but also to avoid humiliating them (Carli 1996, 167).⁶ When the befanotti in the Garfagnana region (190 miles northwest of Pitigliano) made plans for their Befanata, they determined “whether, because of acute poverty, there were some families to whom they would not sing the Befana.”⁷ But they might return to such families after the Befanata to give them part of what they had collected (Rossi 1966, 156 and 162).

The prohibition against the “well-off” forming squads, or even the sense that the custom is for the poor, no longer exists, making way for a less materialist and more symbolic level of meaning.

CHRONIC HUNGER

Bruno Pampanini, who took part in the Befanata before World War II, recalled with great affection the American soldiers who passed through Pitigliano in 1944 and tossed loaves of good bread from their trucks to the local people (2001). They were starving, yet again, under the German occupation, depending on barely edible bread to survive. Hunger was exacerbated by the war, but it had lurked at the edges of everyday life for centuries and reemerged with every disruption. Gesualdo Damiani, a peasant born in 1904, remembered “times in which a single egg was precious” (qtd. in Ferretti 1981a, n.p.).⁸ He was not talking about the war years but about the first half of the twentieth century in lower Tuscany in general. The regular diet in Sorano (six miles northeast of Pitigliano) was anemic: “We were always hungry because there was no substance to what we ate. In the morning when my father got up...he would say, ‘Hey get up and put the pot on for the polenta.’ And what did you eat it with? You would fry up an onion. By the time we ate our bean or bread and onion soup in the evening, we were dying of hunger, and then it never was really satisfied” (an informant named Assunta in Warren 2017, 56).

Mariano Fresta, writing about the Val d’Orcia (thirty-seven miles north of Pitigliano) during the first half of the twentieth century, says, “One must remember that the portions were never satisfying. Some families got up to twelve portions from one chicken; likewise, sometimes two people had to share one egg” (2003, 123–139).⁹

Hunger and malnutrition were endemic in Italy for centuries, in some places even into the second half of the twentieth century.¹⁰ The lack of adequate nutrition could be extreme, traumatic, and deadly; its long-term effects damaged public health severely. One attempt to solve the fundamental problem of widespread caloric deficits was the introduction of corn (maize), an import from North America, already in widespread use by the 1530s. It was eaten as polenta, as it is to the present day (Nabhan 1993, 99). But this “solution” created a new nutritional problem—pellagra, a severe vitamin deficiency that could lead to death. The illness was caused by overdependence on a single crop and ways of preparing it that failed to unlock its nutrients, especially niacin (Nabhan 1993, 103–109). In Sereni’s view, the introduction and ensuing widespread cultivation of corn only increased the peasants’ undernourishment and furthered their exploitation (1997,

181).

Perhaps because today Italy is thought of as a cornucopia of delicious and nutritious food in endless quantity, variety, and excellence, it is hard to realize that until a short time ago, Italy was a land of hunger and famine, of dietary privation and nutritional deficiency for many. The contemporary formula “Italy equals food” (“Eataly”) is the obverse of an older and much longer-lasting formula, “Italy equals hunger.”¹¹ For centuries, Italy was a place where food fantasies often substituted for actual food, and where economic systems and class interfered with adequate nutrition even more than bad weather and crop failure (on food fantasies, see Del Giudice 2001, 11–63; on structural barriers to adequate nutrition, see Diner 2001, especially chapter 3, “‘The Bread Is Soft’: Italian Foodways, American Abundance”). The shameful oxymoron of bountiful agriculture made possible by the labor of desperately poor peasants had already been remarked upon in seventeenth-century Pitigliano (see Paffetti 1636).

But on the eve of Epiphany, poor members of the community could go from house to house to request food without being regarded as beggars. Rather, what transpired was considered an exchange—entertainment in the form of hilarious costume, witty quips, dancing, music (in some places also a skit), and imaginary gifts (described in the Befana song) in exchange for the food that could keep hunger at bay a while longer.

It was winter, the beginning of the leanest time of the year, especially for those without means. But Epiphany eve was not the only moment during the season to come when hunger could be ameliorated, if only temporarily, through performance, and the Befanata was not the only opportunity. There were other holidays during the period that ran from deep winter until the end of spring when itinerant begging rituals could be practiced.

At present in Tuscany, itinerant begging rituals may be celebrated on two other major occasions: Mid-Lent (Mezza-Quaresima), and May Day (Maggiolata).¹² But in the countryside around Pitigliano, the Befanata of Epiphany is the only one that is observed today. The lack of other sanctioned begging days locally may mean that as times improved and the practical, materialist function of the custom lessened, the number of begging days decreased. This perhaps allowed the symbolic dimensions of the food exchange to develop even more

and become more dominant. But we should not assume that the symbolic functions were not present or were secondary in the past. (Biondi goes so far as to say that gaining food was never the top goal of the ritual. According to him, the most important priorities were always human rapport and avoiding humiliation of the poor (Biondi 2007).¹³ Roberto Nizzi echoes Biondi's point, saying, "Above all, you have to celebrate" (2001)).¹⁴

Nevertheless, if the hunger-quelling function has retreated and the symbolic dimension has grown, it may make sense that the custom of multiple begging opportunities on several begging days over the course of the lean season would have been reduced to one opportunity on one day. Symbolic meaning gains power and impact by being compressed and concentrated in one annual event rather than being diffused over several. While the practical necessity of acquiring food was better served by multiple occasions, food symbolism is better served by the focus and coherence of a single occasion.

Food symbolism in the Befanata has several layers. One is the memory of centuries of hunger, subtly embedded in the songs, words, and actions of the magical night. The "intolerable torment of hunger" haunts the Befanata (Camporesi 1989, 103). But before learning how the Befanata reflects and preserves this memory, we need to take a moment to get a concrete sense of the hunger and starvation that the Befanata references.

TRAUMA

The British historian Roy Porter introduces Piero Camporesi's *Bread of Dreams*, a portrait of hunger and starvation in sixteenth- to eighteenth-century Europe, with these words: "What moved the masses most in the societies of five or three hundred years ago? It was not, *au fond*, politics or religion, or art or ideas, or even sexuality, argues Camporesi. It was, above all hunger and the urgent need to relieve it through food" (Porter 1989, 8).

Camporesi presents terrifying descriptions of famine, disease, and starvation in Italy and elsewhere in Europe during the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, gleaned from a variety of unusual sources, to reveal a frightening world. The numbers alone are staggering.

A 1608 source, for example, describes a “famine in Bologna and the surrounding countryside in 1590 [that] was thought at the time to have killed 40,000 people from starvation” (Viziani 1608, 138; qtd. in Camporesi 1989, 86). A citation from France, dated 1683, graphically describes people dying from hunger, the “disease of wretchedness”: there were “some thousands of poor people, with blackened and bruised faces, subdued like skeletons, the majority leaning on crutches and dragging themselves along as best they could to ask for a piece of bread” (Delumeau 1973, 163; qtd. in Camporesi 1989, 27). Camporesi quotes other eyewitness descriptions from seventeenth-century Italy: “[The beggars] were no longer seen one by one, but they actually went about in swarms, old wretches falling from hunger...An incredible quantity of sick people who—persuaded or shown that by waiting to be assisted in their hovels and on the straw of their kennels they would die of hunger before their fever or sores killed them—dragged themselves like so many skeletons, expiring in the public streets, in order to see whether horror and nausea would serve as a better exhortation than charity and faith” (Magalotti 1693, 19–20).¹⁵

Camporesi tells us that “desperate forms of cannibalism were not infrequent in western Europe of the seventeenth century” (1989, 40). He quotes a contemporaneous witness who says, “We would not dare to say if we had not seen it...Several inhabitants...ate their own arms and hands and died in despair” (Delumeau 1973, 164; qtd. in Camporesi 1989, 40). Camporesi adds, “Self-devourment was certainly not unknown in Italy either” (1989, 40).

These horrific descriptions shock us, and, if they are not enough, Camporesi provides many more examples with their gruesome details. But as hypnotic as the horror can be, he does not lose sight of the underlying humanity of the victims, which is obscured by their inhuman appearance as starvation and dying disfigure them. Camporesi quotes a poetic lament from 1587, evoking the pathos of widespread poverty, hunger, and the cold weather that makes everything worse:

Quanti son che vendut'hanno	How many are there who have sold
Fin la penna de' suoi letti'	Even the feathers of their beds;
Quanti ancor cercando vanno	How many more go searching
Alle porte, agli altrui tetti;	At doors, under the roofs of oth-

	ers;
Quanti scalzi fanciulletti	How many shoeless little children
Vanno attorno mendicando	Go around begging,
Sotto i portici tremando	Under the porticoes, shaking
Per sto freddo disonesto	Because of this unfair cold.
("Lamento..." 1967, 116).	

Leaving home to search and beg for food may have sometimes been an excuse that hid the even more painful and despairing desire to escape witnessing the death by starvation of one's own children: in Modena in 1601, "the poor, in order to avoid seeing their children die of hunger, set out into the world struggling" (Vicini 1911, 176).¹⁶

"HER CHILDREN WHO ARE HUNGRY"

These passages might give the reader some notion—although, mercifully, only an intellectual notion—of the horrors of hunger and starvation that were part of the collective memory of Italians and other Europeans. Unexpectedly, the Befanata echoes some of the specific details of those terrible times. The vagabond's search for food that is alluded to in these passages—the "searching / At doors, under the roofs of others"—reverberates centuries later in what the Befana and her troupe does: wandering, begging, and even leaving (imaginary) children behind. The Befanata, after all, is an "*itinerant, begging ritual*." In every Befanata, the Befana herself is a wanderer, a mother who approaches each home begging for food, implicitly and sometimes explicitly, for her hungry children:

La Befana è poverina	The Befana is poor.
lèi non ha salciccia e pane	She doesn't have sausage and bread
per i figli che hanno fame	for her children who are hungry.
va cercando da mangiar. ¹⁷	She goes searching for something to eat.

The version of the Befana song from Montevitozzo, a tiny hamlet of about one hundred people twelve miles north of Pitigliano, informs

the hosts that the Befana's children are asleep and that she has come to find food for them:

La Befana fa ritorno
dalle parti dei confini
addormenta i suoi bambini
e va in cerca di mangià
(Biondi 1981, 82).¹⁸

The Befana is returning
from the borderlands.
She has put her children to sleep,
and she's searching for food.

In the countryside surrounding Sovana, a town five miles north-west of Pitigliano, and extending from there to Montebuono (another six miles to the north), the ritual in which the company entered the house had a special feature that consisted of a fixed dialogue between the Befana and the inhabitants of the house. This dialogue also emphasized the Befana's children. The Befana knocked at the door, and those inside responded:

"Who is it?"
"The Befana."
"Where are you coming from?"
"From La Verna."¹⁹
"And how many children do you have?"
"One hundred."
"Are you cold?"
Everyone: "Brrr, brrr..."
"Then come in" (Biondi 1981, 67).²⁰

Here we also have the cold, as in the 1587 lament cited above. This confluence between the texts is not because of a direct, lineal connection between the lament and the Befanata script but because hunger and cold were grave, familiar threats to life in Italy for centuries; they left scars, if not open wounds, and they were not forgotten. One of the functions of ritual is to maintain memories, including painful memories. The Befanata reminds everyone in its subtle, between-the-lines way that hunger and starvation are never impossible and cannot be permanently banished.

HUNGER IN ITALIAN FOLK LITERATURE

The Befanata is of a piece with other folk transformations of hunger and starvation into literature, art, and ritual. Magical folktales, for instance, through fantasy, bring a kind of vicarious “relief” from hunger. They are part of the “reservoir of fantasies of the poor classes” throughout the world (Camporesi 1989, 149). In Italy the oral performance of folktales was part of the everyday life of the rural poor for centuries. We have already encountered the Italian storytelling tradition in the *veglia*, discussed in chapter 3 (see Falassi 1980).

Folktales in general offer their audiences vicarious wish fulfillment, and one of the most common wishes fulfilled in Italian folktales is simply to eat when hungry, to have adequate food. As folklorist Luisa Del Giudice writes, “In the Italian tradition, many are the magic tablecloths, sacks, or pots which produce food whenever asked to do so” (2001, 48). The rewards given the heroine in a tale told by an Italian immigrant in Detroit, for instance, are fine clothes and a “bounteous meal”—precisely what was lacking not only in the life of the fictional heroine of the tale, but in the life of the teller when she was a girl in northern Italy (“The Cats under the Sea” told by Clementina Todesco in Mathias and Raspa 1985, 95–102). Not only gold coins and jewels but food and clothing are the typical rewards for proper behavior in the magical moral world of folktales; examples could be cited endlessly. Many tales come to a close not just with the words “they lived happily ever after” but with extravagant wedding feasts. Perhaps, for a perennially hungry audience, they lived happily ever after partly because they *ate* happily ever after. In an Italian version of the universally popular “Hansel and Gretel”—a story in which starvation motivates the action and menacing cannibalism also plays a key part—the house that draws the two children in is not made of gingerbread and candy but is “filled to the brim with delicious sausages, hams, salami, breads, and all types of wonderful foods. The children went in and ate and ate” (Agonito 1967, 58).²¹ As we will soon see, these particular foods (first and foremost, sausages, hams, and salami) are constantly requested in the Befana songs and regularly provided the revelers by the Befanata hosts. The number of Italian folktales in which the action turns on food and hunger is astounding, as one may

realize reading Italo Calvino's anthology of tales from Italian oral tradition (Calvino 1980).²²

CUCCAGNA

Besides uncounted folktales, there is another "folk literary" tradition that correlates food-wise with the Befanata—the fantasy known as the Land of Cuccagna, an imaginary "gastronomic utopia" where "rivers flow with wine, houses have walls of sausage and cheese, roast chickens fall from the sky, fish jump out of the pond and into your arms...And right in the center of this land is a huge mountain of cheese. A cauldron sits on top and *maccheroni* and *tortellini* spew forth all day long, roll down the Parmesan mountain and land in a pool of rich capon broth...Hens lay 200 eggs a day...If you are hungry and tired, my friend, forget your salads and vegetables, and come with me to the Land of Cuccagna" (from a Neapolitan broadside from 1715 as paraphrased in Del Giudice 2001, 11; for a major earlier work on Cuccagna, see Cocchiara 1956).

In Cuccagna (or Bengodi—the Land of Pleasure—as Boccaccio called it in the fourteenth century), "macaroni falls from heaven like edible rain; the earth, no longer worked, miraculously produces pre-cooked foods; the trees do not toss down buds and leaves, but hams and clothes; the animals, their own butchers, spontaneously roast themselves for the comfort of men's stomachs. Work is abolished" (Camporesi 1989, 80; Montanari 2009, 43 and 76).²³

It is important to recall Cuccagna in relation to food in the Befanata not only because they both testify indirectly to a history of hunger but also because they both focus on the same foods and for the same reasons. The Cuccagna tradition is part of the cultural context of the Befanata, and Cuccagna-esque motifs actually arise in association with Epiphany eve in some places, as we will see. Cuccagna is an elaborate, unbridled food fantasy that points to its opposite, the stark reality of perpetual hunger (Del Giudice 2001, 12). Substituting plenty for hunger, a bold and clever inversion, the Cuccagna of folk tradition imaginatively exposes the same centuries-long reality of food shortage that Camporesi illustrates through the horrors of factual history and the Befanata references in its customs. As Del Giudice

puts it, “the Land of *Plenty* inversely reflects the Land of *Hunger*” (Del Giudice 2001, 12). Or as Montanari writes, “Hunger inspires gastronomic dreams” (2009, 77). There is also an important difference between the Land of Cuccagna and the Befanata. Cuccagna offered an endless virtual banquet as a substitute for the real thing. The Befanata, however, delivered the real thing, if only for a short time. Although the quantity of Cuccagna-esque foods gathered on Epiphany eve was not unlimited, as in Cuccagna, it was substantial and, most importantly, not imaginary.

What the Befanata and Cuccagna have in common, of course, is a shared “menu.” The “diet” the Land of Cuccagna features consists of precisely the most sought-after Befanata foods—salami, prosciutto, sausage, fowl, cheese, and eggs—calorie-rich foods high in protein and fat.²⁴ These foods were the most desirable yet least available to the poor of Italy. The desirability of such foods *for health reasons* (avoidance of starvation and malnutrition) and for the calories needed for physical work and body heat in winter and spring may be hard for many to comprehend today. As Montanari puts it, “in all traditional societies, unlike today, fat was not an enemy to be avoided, but rather a respected and appreciated friend. The difference between the two perspectives, very simply, is the difference between hunger and plenty...The possibility of eating copiously and regularly was reserved for the few. This is why ‘fat’ never had a negative connotation” (2009, 100).

Indeed, for many years, “Italians [were] ‘vegetarian by necessity and not by choice’” (Pellegrini 1962, 24). As one Italian immigrant to the United States put it, “Over there [in Italy], if you had a piece of fat, you was lucky, and boy, it tasted good” (Peter Mossini qtd. in Coan 1997, 44). In 1900, another Italian immigrant wrote in a letter to those left behind, “Here I eat meat three times a day, not three times a year!” (letter from Alessandro Ranciglio qtd. in Mormino 1986, 43). Such a possibility must have seemed fantastic to those “back home” because for the Italian poor at that time, the statement about eating meat “three times a year” could have been literally true. In fact, an immigrant to America remarked that in his hometown in Sicily, peasants were given meat three times a year, on three major holidays (Valletta 1968, 23). The meat was provided by the biggest local landowner (Diner 2001, 43). Tuscany was different from Sicily

in many ways, but the custom of providing the poor with food (especially meat) on particularly important religious feasts was something both regions had in common. However, the means of doing so were entirely different. In Sicily it appears that food was distributed directly by wealthy landowners in a public show of piety, beneficence, and power that was humiliating to the recipients. In Tuscany the channel of food redistribution was the Befanata and other begging rituals; food came from neighbors who often were peasants themselves, just not the poorest. If indeed this contrast can be generalized, it becomes even clearer how the Befanata protected the dignity of the poor by turning begging into exchange.

In broadsides and songs, Cuccagna was presented as a *place*, but in some local Epiphany eve beliefs Cuccagna could also be imagined as a *time*. Epiphany eve was the Night of Cuccagna, and it was nearby: “Thus on that magical night, filled with enchantments, wonders and incredible marvels, the walls of the houses in the country and in town could even turn into cheese or ricotta, while the bed sheets could become lasagna noodles. Scrap iron, chains, and locks on the doors and windows could be transformed into pieces of sausage or salamis or other good things. Water could be transformed into wine or the purest olive oil and that was true for brooks, streams, rivers, springs, and wells” (Mauri 1989, 43).²⁵

On this night the fantasy was said to unfold right where you lived. In reality the good food that could be gathered through the Befanata was as close to Cuccagna as anyone could get, and perhaps the fantasy transformation of bed sheets, chains, and water into lasagna noodles, sausage, and wine was a poetic way of paying homage to the Befanata, for it really did deliver the goods. What could be eaten and gathered in one night might not seem significant to those of us who are well fed every day; but to have a full stomach and a good meal in the midst of a long stretch of meager nourishment is significant to those who often go hungry. We have already heard testimony in which a single egg or even a “piece of fat” was significant.²⁶ As historian Roy Porter writes, “Lenten living was a cruel and perpetual necessity as much as an act of Christian holiness, in which a public feast could be the apogee of a lifetime’s aspirations” (Porter 1989, 9).

CICCIA! CICCIA!

As we have seen, the desired foods are remarkably consistent, whether in Cuccagna fantasies, folktales, or Befanate. They were and still are pork products (especially sausages) eggs, wine, and cheese.²⁷ Sausage is not only rich in flavor but, as already noted, high in protein and fat, necessary elements consistently lacking in the diet of the poor. Members of the Befana squads might shout *ciccìa, ciccìa!* (“meat, meat!” or “fat, fat!”) in the presence of their hosts; in other words, they would request the fat flesh of the pig.²⁸ In at least one area, the singing of “La Befana” usually ends with squad members exclaiming *ciccìo, ciccìo* (Biondi 1981, 89–90n3).²⁹ Sometimes they pointed at sausages, salamis, and prosciuttos hanging from the kitchen ceiling as they shouted “ciccìo” because until recently, that was where preserved meat was often “stored.” In what seems to have been part of another set dialogue, in Elmo (seven miles northeast of Pitigliano), the Befana says, “Beautiful young mistress, give me a little bread, a little sausage for my children, look at how much you have up there” (from the recollection of Pippi Piero, from Elmo, in Biondi 1981, 73n4).³⁰ She is pointing to the ceiling as she says these words.

Although in the Pitigliano area the person who carries the donated foods in a basket is usually called the *pagneraio* (from the Italian *paniere*, bread), he can also be called the *ciccìaio*, a word that refers, maybe optimistically and auspiciously, to *ciccìa*, the most important food he hopes to gather in quantity. Enzo Giuliani, who has been a member of Befana squads for many years, as was his father, told me that the person who carried the foods was sometimes called the *car-naio*. This word, too, derives from the type of food (*carne*, or meat) that he hoped to collect.³¹ The *pagneraio* was often the most robust of the *befanotti* (as was the case in the groups with which I traveled) because he was tasked with defending what was gathered in his basket from attacks by other Befana squads. This function is no longer necessary, but it is remembered and honored in the choice of a strong man as *pagneraio*.³² Biondi mentions one man, Guglielmo Biagetti, who served as *pagneraio* in Elmo (seven miles north of Pitigliano) for many years in the early twentieth century “because he was tough on whoever tried to swipe the sausage; to have collected more *ciccìo*

than other groups was an occasion for bragging; to have collected less was, on the other hand an occasion for teasing among the Befane” (Biondi 1981, 73n5).³³ One reason the Pitigliano Befana squads visited houses in the surrounding countryside rather than within the town of Pitigliano (where, since it was a town, there was little distance between houses and thus many more houses could have been reached in a shorter time, resulting in larger amounts of food) was that animals raised for consumption, especially pigs, were not kept in town and thus there was little possibility of collecting pork in town (Biondi 1981, 75n20).

There are also seasonal, calendrical reasons why *ciccia* was what the Befana squads sought. Epiphany is the beginning of Carnevale (*carne vale* meaning “remove meat” or “farewell to meat”). Since meat cannot be eaten for the forty days of Lent that follow the end of Carnevale, meat is sought increasingly through the climactic moment of Martedì Grasso (Mardi Gras or Fat Tuesday, another reference to *ciccia*, fat meat). For some, it is a matter of “get it while you can.”

Providing the befanotti with pork products also fits Tuscany’s customary agricultural ecology. November and December are the months when year-old pigs are butchered. If there is ever an abundance of fresh and freshly preserved pork, it is during these months and January. Eraldo Baldini, writing about the “special and predominant role regarding the meats of the pig” in the Befanata song and ritual in the adjacent Emilia-Romagna region, notes “the temporary, large availability of fresh pork...during the days around the sixth of January” (1996, 21).³⁴ Many peasants had a yearling pig or two of their own to slaughter, but those who were too poor to own even a single pig had no source of meat or other major source of protein and fat, which was all the more necessary and desirable during the cold months of winter, when other fresh foods, including most fruits and vegetables, were also unavailable. Michele, from Sorano, said that his family “would survive the winter with the meat of the pig” (“Michele” is an anonymous interviewee qtd. in Warren 2017, 64).

BEGGARS CAN BE CHOOSERS

Wherever we find them, costumed squads that visit by night expect

refreshment from their hosts. In both Ireland and Italy, the squads would also gather the means for another, later occasion—a Mummer's Ball or a cenone. Irish mummers would request money from their hosts: "Money I want, money I crave. / If you don't give me money, / I'll sweep yous all to your grave" (Glassie 1975, 72). Italian befanotti would request the foods they would eat at their party a few days later. In Scandinavian Twelfth Night (Epiphany) mumming, it seems that sweet treats, apples, and nuts, carried away in a basket, were generally the norm, although alcohol could also play a part (see Gunnell 2007).

Sometimes the final verses of the Befana song make the request for the most-valued foods, in generous amounts, quite clear, specific, and even pointed:

La Befana non vi chiede
vi ringrazia e prende tutto

vino pane anche il prosciutto
la salsiccia e l'ova ancor.³⁵

Siam contenti di due uova
cacio, un pollo e del prosciutto;
a ccettiamo proprio tutto
purchè venga dal buon cor.³⁶

E non fate come Golo
che ci ha dato un ovo solo.³⁷

The Befana doesn't beg;
she thanks you and takes every-
thing—

wine, bread, the prosciutto too,
sausage and eggs besides.

We're happy with a couple of
eggs,
cheese, a chicken and some
prosciutto;
we'll accept anything
that comes from a good heart.

And don't act like Golo
who gave us only a single egg.

The request can appear as a quid pro quo:

Se me dai la salsicella
te la canto la Pasquarella.³⁸

Se ci date del maiale
pregheremo pel porcello
che vi venga grasso e bello

If you give me sausage,
I'll sing you the Pasquarella.

If you give us of the pig,
we'll pray for the piglet,
that it may grow fat and fine,

e castagne in quantità.³⁹

and lots of chestnuts.

The direct request not just for food but specifically for pork products is an old part of the custom as this Pasquella (as the Befanata is known in the Emilia-Romagna region) song from the early nineteenth century illustrates:

Da lontano abbitam saputo
che amazzao il porco avete,
qualche cosa ci darete
o salcicia o mortadella.
Viva, viva la Pasquella!
(Tassoni 1973, 301).⁴⁰

From far away we knew
that you have slaughtered a pig.
Give us something,
sausage or mortadella.
Long live Pasquella!

In places where the Befana song is followed by a skit, the food request may be made in indirect comic fashion. A character dressed as a buffoonish doctor is called upon to help the Befana, who has fallen down. Her temperature is taken with a yardstick (actually a meter stick), and the doctor announces that she needs a medicine made of dozens of eggs and meters of sausage: “The old man [the Befana’s husband] presents the prescription to the master of the house and waits for what is offered” (Ferretti 1981b, 12–13).⁴¹ Phrases like “dozens of eggs” and “meters of sausage,” besides the yardstick thermometer, contribute to the suggestive, carnivalesque comedy of the skit; but in the context of the Befanata, the mention of eggs and sausages is also a reminder and request for precisely the food gifts that are most desired and expected.⁴² And of course, one can’t refuse a remedy to an injured person, especially a weak old woman.

BLESSINGS AND CURSES

The Befana’s auspicious blessings for the family, its domestic animals, and its crops may be offered in the Befana song’s concluding lyrics. The Mancioccos claim that today’s blessings in song originated in the ancients’ desire to receive their ancestors’ promise of fertility and life by propitiating their ancestors and avoiding offending them. Similarly, today’s troupes of singers, the befanotti, perhaps

the modern equivalent and transformation of the ancients' returning ancestors, bless their hosts, encouraging them to be generous so that all will go well with them in the course of the coming year. Versions of "La Befana" include such blessings:

Vi si dà la buonanotte
e la pace sia con voi
la salute a noi e voi
e il buon Dio vi aiuterà.⁴³

We say goodnight to you,
and may peace be with you,
may health be with us and you,
and may the good God help you.

Lo benedisco lo fiore di grano
vi damo la bonanotte
e ce ne andiamo.⁴⁴

I bless the wheat.
We say good night to you
and we leave.

Se qualcosa a noi darete
averete la benedizione
per la prossima stagione
grano e vino in quantità.⁴⁵

If you give us something
you will have our blessing
for the next season:
plenty of wheat and wine.

In blessing the poor (i.e., the Befana squad) with generous gifts of food, the family brings blessings upon itself to be realized in the form of agricultural success. But if the host family does not share with the squad, the family loses the squad's blessings, incurring possible negative consequences. In some songs this threat is indirect but implicit:

Se ci date poi dell'ova
pregherem pe le galline
dalla volpe e le faine
ve le possa liberà.⁴⁶

If, then, you give us some eggs,
we'll pray for your hens,
that from the fox and the weasels
they will be free.

Se ci date del prosciutto
pregheremo pel porcello
che vi venga grasso e bello
e la ghianda sia per tutto.

If you give us some prosciutto,
we'll pray for the young pig,
that he'll grow to be fat and fine,
and acorns will be everywhere.

Se ci date anche un quartino
pregheremo per la vigna

If you also give us a quarter liter
[of wine]
we'll pray for the grape vines,

che lontana stia la tigna	that the ringworm will be kept far away,
e ben colmo venga il tino. ⁴⁷	and the vats will be completely full.

Notice that in these songs the foods that are requested and the food sources that are threatened are directly connected. If eggs are requested and are forthcoming, the host's chickens will be protected; if sausages are requested and are provided, the host's pigs will prosper; if wine is requested and provided, the grape vines will be protected from disease and will be productive. These direct connections make the hosts' responsibility for the output of their farm via generosity to the Befana squad immediate, concrete, and clear. The relationship between what you give and what you get is unmistakable, though stated politely and positively in these particular songs.

At other times, as in the following texts, the threat is negative and explicit: if you *don't* give us what is expected, there will be negative consequences. Or, alternately, such threats may be understood to be part of the teasing, including pranks, that goes on during the Befanata rather than actual, attempted intimidation (Ferretti 1981b, 21).⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the threats in some of the following verses were once warnings or at least protests meant to cajole the hosts into giving more. "A pitch for charity with an undercurrent of extortion" is how Carl Lindahl puts it in describing begging in the Cajun country Mardi Gras (2004, 136). As Biondi says of one stanza that threatens the hosts' swine with the *rossino* disease (below), "This strophe was sung only to families that didn't give anything or too little" (1981, 88).⁴⁹

Se la Befana non busca il ciccio	If the Befana doesn't get the ciccio,
buttare la vogliamo in un roghiccio.	we'll want to throw her in a ditch.
Se la Befana non busca l'ova	If the Befana doesn't get eggs,
buttare la vogliamo nella gora.	we'll want to throw her in the canal.
Se la Befana non busca gnente	If the Befana doesn't get any-

thing
 buttare la vogliamo nella Lente.⁵⁰ we'll want to throw her in the
 Lente.

In these lines, sung by the befanotti, it appears as if the Befana is their hostage, and they are shaming the hosts, saying, in effect, if you don't give these things to the Befana (i.e., to us, the squad), she could be the one to pay for it. And you will be cursed for what you have caused her.⁵¹ The request is now a demand, and the alternatives to generosity are stark:

Se qualcosa a noi ci date pregherem per il porcello che un altr'anno venga bello again e Sant'Antonio lo salverà.	If you give us something, we'll pray for your young pig, that it will come out fine once and Saint Anthony will protect it.
--	---

E se niente a noi ci date pregherem per il suino che gli venga il mal rossino e S. Antonio lo facci crepà. ⁵²	And if you give us nothing, we will pray for the swine, that it gets the rossino disease, and Saint Anthony will make it die.
---	---

The prominence of Saint Anthony the Abbot in this and similar verses rather than some other saint merits a brief explanation. This Saint Anthony is the patron saint and protector of animals, especially pigs. In addition, he is often appealed to for cures for infectious diseases, particularly diseases of the skin. His day is January 17, only eleven days after Epiphany. January 17 was also once celebrated as a begging ritual in some places, especially in the Abruzzo region, southeast of Tuscany (Leydi 1973, 87). The folk celebration of Sant'Antonio Abate followed the same pattern as the Befanata: in response to the traditional song for Sant'Antonio, the singers and musicians "would receive, in return, various gifts, but above all products from the butchering of the pig" (Leydi 1973, 87).⁵³ Like Epiphany, Saint Anthony's day fits within the seasonal time frame in which "excess" pork is available and especially desirable from the point of view of caloric need. Sant'Antonio Abate is also called "Sant'Antonio del

porcello” (Saint Anthony of the Pig), and in his iconography he is accompanied by a pig. Sometimes he is considered the husband of the Befana.

The sung curses that were invoked to manipulate ungenerous hosts could reach a devastating and all-encompassing extreme:

La volpe vi entrasse nel pollaio	May the fox enter your chicken coop
e vi mangiasse tutte le galline	and eat all your chickens.
la tignola v'entrasse nel granaio	May the moth enter your grana- ry,
l'acetone nelle bestie vacche	may acetone enter the cattle,
a voi un'accidente che vi piglia	and may an accident befall you,
capo di casa e tutta la famiglia. ⁵⁴	head of the household, and the entire family.

Behind the expectation of reciprocation lay the possibility of a serious curse, a kind of blackmail directed at those who might not live up to their community obligation to share and think of others, especially the less fortunate. Running through the songs was a thread (sometimes implicit and sometimes explicit) about misfortune as likely payback to those who were not generous in sharing food with the Befana and her company. There was a fitting symmetry to the curse: if you don't share your food, you will lose it. The threat of being cursed may have derived from the oldest layers of the custom, from the attributes of the powerful ancient figure who evolved to become the Befana. Another possibility is that the threat of a curse derives from that goddess's opposite, the Befana as a downtrodden figure exemplifying poverty and possessing the mysterious powers of the weak and disenfranchised. It is not hard to see the exchange as an ethical transaction, a mandate expressed and realized not abstractly but with the concreteness of custom as well. But in any case, because of a hard-to-define belief or a mix of attitudes—call it superstition or circumspection, moral reflection or prudence—the threat has potency even today, perhaps in the spirit of a joke, but in the mode of “kidding on the square.”

NOTES

¹ The Befanata is called “La Pasquella” in parts of the Emilia-Romagna and Abruzzo regions.

² Many other scholars pursue symbolic interpretations of food, and the literature is vast. Several influential examples are Barthes 1997; Brown and Mussel, eds. 1984; Lévi-Strauss 1997; Montanari 2006; Soler 1997.

³ “Qui il significato di redistribuzione dei beni attraverso la questua è chiarissimo; infatti nelle famiglie benestanti si proibiva severamente ai figli di andare a cantare la Befana, riservata invece ai più bisognosi.” Biondi reiterated this point to me several times in conversation and in a tape-recorded interview (2007).

⁴ “Molte testimonianze, soprattutto sull’Amiata, parlano delle squadre della Befana come formate dalla gente più povera, che magari non poteva permettersi la carne né possedeva un maiale da macellare.”

⁵ Angelo Biondi, personal communication, December 17, 2006.

⁶ “The group didn’t stop at the homes of day laborers, because they were well known to be poor families” (“Nelle case dei braccianti il gruppo non si fermava, essendo notoriamente famiglie povere”). The reference here is to the custom in Villa Inferno San Andrea, near Cervia (170 miles northeast of Pitigliano) and other locations in the area.

⁷ “Se c’era, a causa di una povertà acuta, qualche famiglia a cui non cantare la Befana.”

⁸ “Erano tempi in cui un solo uovo era prezioso.”

⁹ “Bisogna ricordare che le porzioni non erano mai soddisfacenti: in qualche famiglia da un pollo si ricavano perfino dodici porzioni; così, talora, con un uovo dovevano mangiare due persone.”

¹⁰ And, of course, in Europe this was true not only in Italy. Dorothy Noyes writes that “Berga [in Catalonia] was hungry in living memory, had always been hungry... Festivals in Berga were occasions to distribute food to the poor until the mid-twentieth century (2003, 153).

¹¹ The brand name “Eataly” catches the idea perfectly, even if it is an awkward, inappropriate coinage. It refers to a worldwide food conglomerate that features restaurants, bakeries, retail products, bars, and even cooking schools.

¹² See chapter 2 for more on these days and a more complete list of other begging days in Noyes 2003.

¹³ Biondi grew up in Sorano, six miles northeast of Pitigliano, and in the nearby countryside.

¹⁴ “Inanzi tutto si deve fare festa.”

¹⁵ “Si tratta che non si vede vano più a uno a uno, ma andavano effettivamente a sciami, vecchi miserabili cascanti di fame...una quantità incredibile di malati che perusasi, o chiariti che ad aspettar d’esser soccorsi nelle loro stamberghe, e su la paglia de’ lor canili sarebbon prima morti della fame che della febbre o delle piaghe, si strascicavano come tanti scheletri spiranti per le pubbliche strade, per veder se l’orrore, e la nausea servisser loro di miglior raccomandazione che la carità, e la fede.” The translation is from Camporesi 1989, 180.

¹⁶ “li poveri, per non vedere li figli morire dalla fame se ne vanno per il mondo malabiando.” Another example is the following account: “A few days ago [April 1601] in the town of Reggio...a peasant, along with his wife, so as not to see their three sons perish from hunger in front of their eyes, locked them in the house and set out in the name of heaven. After three days had passed the neighbours, not having seen them, decided to knock down the door, which they did. And they found two of the sons dead, and the third dying with straw in his mouth, and on the fire there was a pot with straw inside which was being boiled in order to make it softer for eating” (Vicini 1911, 177). The translation is from Camporesi 1989, 85.

¹⁷ From “La Befana” as sung in Collecchio, forty miles west of Pitigliano. Quoted in Ferretti 1981b, 42.

¹⁸ Stanzas with the same theme—the idea that the Befana has put her children to sleep and is searching for food for them—are sung in at least two other towns in the area (Ferretti 1981b, 40 and 42).

¹⁹ La Verna is the site of a monastery in the Apennine mountains in northeast Tuscany where Saint Francis of Assisi lived, and it is strongly identified with him. La Verna is at a high elevation and is very cold—symbolically, the coldest place one could imagine (Biondi 2007).

²⁰ “Chi è?”

“La Befana.”

“Da dove venite?”

“Dalla Verna.”

“E quanti figli avete?”

“Cento.”

“Avete freddo?”

e tutti: “Brrrr, brrrr...”

“Allora entrate.”

²¹ Note that in Hansel and Gretel the parents separate themselves from their starving

children, as in some of the actual historical instances of famine and mass starvation referenced by Camporesi and cited above. Also note that in this particular text, the villain is a hungry bear rather than a witch, the usual villain of the Hansel and Gretel story. The bear as a symbol of an appetite that threatens to destroy may further intensify the undercurrent of hunger that haunts the tale. This text is an example of tale type 327, the Children and the Ogre, in the Aarne-Thompson-Uther folktale classification system. See Uther 2004, 284–286.

²² The original Italian book is *Fiabe italiane raccolte dalla tradizione popolare durante gli ultimi cento anni e trascritte in lingua dai vari dialetti da Italo Calvino* (Calvino 1956 [1993]). Although the book has been criticized for Calvino's rewriting of texts that were originally collected from oral sources, it should be pointed out that, to his credit, he identifies the specific changes he made to the texts and contributes significantly by making a large number of Italian folktales readily accessible to Italian speakers (the texts were originally in Italy's many dialects). Thanks to George Martin's translation, they are also available to English speakers.

²³ Other nations with their own histories of hunger imagine their own traditional gastronomic utopias, with foods reflective of their unique, culture-based, dietary preferences: "Cockaigne/Lubberland (England), Schlaraffenland (Germany), Cocagne/Panigons (France), or Oleana (Norway)" (Del Giudice 2001, 12).

²⁴ "The high frequency of cheese and meat make protein and animal fats the most prevalent feature of Cuccagna. Rarely are vegetables mentioned" (Del Giudice 2001, 13). The broadside Del Giudice paraphrased, quoted above, tells the reader specifically to "forget your salads and vegetables."

²⁵ "Così in quella notte magica, piena d'incanti, prodigi, e incredibili meraviglie, le mura delle case di paesi e città potevano anche diventare di cacio o ricotta, mentre le lenzuola nei letti potevano diventare lasagne. Ferraglie, catene, serrature di usci e finestre, potevano trasformarsi in rocchi di salsiccia o in salamini e altre buone cose. L'acqua poteva trasformarsi in vino o in purissimo olio e ciò valeva per ruscelli, torrenti, fiumi, sorgenti o fontane."

²⁶ Another example is a comment by Giuseppe (Beppe) Cini, who traveled with a squad in the late 1930s when he was a boy and later recalled, "Half a sausage was already something." Field journal, January 12, 2010.

²⁷ Nevertheless, in some areas—though not near Pitigliano—the expected foods were nuts, dried fruits, oranges, and sweets. See Giannini 1893, 92; Manciocco and Manciocco 2006, 95; Priore, 1985, 8; Rossi 1966, 155; Toschi 1963, 248–249. Nuts, like meat and eggs, are rich in protein and fat, and dried fruit offers concentrated calories. The 2006 film *Golden Door* (Nuovomondo [New world] is the original Italian title) visualizes immigrants' predeparture dreams of America with images of gigantic vegetables and people swimming in milk (Crialessi 2006). I think that the filmmakers got the folk tradition wrong, if that is what they were striving for. Giant vegetables and abundant milk do not correspond to the rather consistent ingredient lists of the Cuccagna fantasy, folktales, and Befanata requests. What the film's foods and the traditional food

fantasies do have in common is their tall-tale-like exaggeration.

²⁸ As reported in Ferretti 1981b, 39, for example, where the word is spelled as *cicciu* (i.e., in dialect). It can also be spelled as *ciccio*, which usually means “chubby.” The root word comprises the last two syllables of *salciccia* (*sal-cic-cia*), sausage, a common pronunciation and spelling of standard Italian *salsiccia*, which combines *sal* (or *sale*, salt) with *ciccia* (fat meat or fat). These, along with spices, and with salt acting as a preservative, are the basic ingredients of sausage and other cured meats.

²⁹ This version is sung at San Giovanni delle Contee (fourteen miles northeast of Pitigliano) and was recorded by Biondi from Aroldo Parrini.

³⁰ “Padroncina bella, mi dia un po’ di pane, un po’ di salsiccia pe mi figlioli, vedi quanta ce n’ha su in cima.”

³¹ Field journal, March 6, 2007. For other names of the *pagneraio*, his importance and liminal character, see chapter 6, the section titled “The Befana’s Family.”

³² In a New Year’s mumming tradition on the Orkney Islands, a parallel figure called a “Carrying Horse” functioned in a similar way: “The carrying horse...was a marked man, selected for his strength. His duty was to carry a *caisie* [straw basket] or a *wino-cubbie*, in which were gathered all the eatables received on their house to house visitation” (Firth 1922 [1974], 124).

³³ “All’Elmo fu a lungo ‘pagneraio’ Gugli elmo Biagetti (cl. 1916) perché era duro a fassi fregà la *salciccia*; l’aver raccolto più ‘*ciccio*’ era occasione di vanto, l’averne raccolto meno era, viceversa, occasione di sfottimento tra le Befane.”

³⁴ “Un ruolo particolare e predominante riguarda le carni di maiale” and “la momentanea grande disponibilità di carni suine fresche...nei giorni attorno al 6 di gennaio.”

³⁵ From “La Befana” as performed in Grosseto in 1981. Originally the text is from Castagnolo, 147 miles northwest of Pitigliano. Quoted in Ferretti 1981b, 45.

³⁶ From “La Befana” as performed in Grosseto, 1981. Originally the text is from Porona, forty-three miles northwest of Pitigliano. In Porona, singing this version was a tradition that ended in the 1950s. Quoted in Ferretti 1981b, 55.

³⁷ From “La Befana” as sung in Elmo (seven miles north of Pitigliano), and quoted in Biondi 1981, 85.

³⁸ From “La Pasquarella” as sung in the Abruzzo region to the south and east of Tuscany, where the Befana song is called the Pasquarella, and quoted in Lancellotti 1951, 93. Another text from the Marche region, to the east of Tuscany and Umbria, is equally explicit:

Se mi dai la *sarcicetta*
oppur la *costarella*

If you give me sausage
or else cutlets

te la conto la Pasquella	I'll sing you the Pasquella,
la Pasquella armoniosa.	the harmonious Pasquella.

(Eustacchi-Nardi 1958, 100).

³⁹ From "La Befana" as sung in Marroneto (fifty miles north of Pitigliano), recorded in 1996, and quoted in Galli 1996.

⁴⁰ The verbal formula of the first two lines remains unchanged and popular in the same area two hundred years later:

Da lontano l'abbiamo saputo	From far away we knew
che il maiale l'avete ammazzato,	that you have slaughtered a pig
e se non ci date niente	And if you don't give us anything
che vi piglia un accidente!	may an accident befall you!

(The Pasquella song as sung in Cervia [in the Emilia-Romagna region]). (Carli 1996, 53).

⁴¹ "Il Vecchio presenta la ricetta al padrone di casa e aspetta le offerte."

⁴² The skit with a doctor and a comical cure recalls the Irish mumming tradition documented by Glassie in which a cartoonish doctor is called upon to revive a man (in the Catholic versions, Saint Patrick, who has just been slain). The doctor's prescription in the Irish tradition is equally absurd: "The filliciefee of a bumbee, / And the thunder nouns of a creepie stool, / All boiled up in a woodenleatheriron pot, / Let that be given to him fourteen fortnights before day, / And if that doesn't cure'im, I'll ask no pay" (Glassie 1975, 43).

⁴³ Tape-recorded performance, January 5–6, 2001, near Pitigliano, cassette tape 2001-SS-002.

⁴⁴ Tape-recorded performance, January 5–6, 2001, near Pitigliano, cassette tape 2001-SS-002.

⁴⁵ From "La Befana" as sung in Collecchio (forty miles west of Pitigliano), and quoted in Ferretti 1981b, 16.

⁴⁶ From "La Befana" as sung in Marroneto (fifty miles north of Pitigliano), and quoted in Ferretti 1981b, 49.

⁴⁷ From the text of the Befana tradition known as the "Trenta Giovane" (Thirty Youths), sung in the area near Castel del Piano on Mount Amiata, about thirty-one miles north of Pitigliano, quoted in Ferretti 1981b, 23.

⁴⁸ Ferretti mentions that "in some cases the pranks were reciprocated like when, at Castell'Azzara after the preparation of the meat of the butchered pig, a fake sausage, filled with sawdust, was made to give to the Befana squad" ("In qualche caso gli scher-

zi erano reciproci come quando a Castellazzara, dopo la confezionatura della carne del maiale macellato, si faceva una falsa salciccia, ripiena di segatura, da donare alla squadra della Befana”).

⁴⁹ “Si cantava questa strofa solo alle famiglie che non davano niente o troppo poco.”

⁵⁰ The Lente is a local river. Local geographic references are rare in the Befana songs. This text is from Sorano (six miles northeast of Pitigliano) and is cited in Biondi 1981, 80. Biondi considers the partial text he reproduces to be part of “an old song.”

⁵¹ For more on the Befana as victim, see chapter 6, “The Befana and Her Cohort.”

⁵² From “La Befana” as sung near Cerreto, six miles northeast of Pitigliano, and quoted in Biondi 1981, 83.

⁵³ “Ricevano, in compenso, vari doni, ma soprattutto prodotti della macellazione del maiale.”

⁵⁴ This passage from “La Befana” was collected from Tecla Rosati of Montemerano, thirteen miles west of Pitigliano, and quoted in Biondi 1981, 99.

WORKS CITED

- Agonito, Rosemary. 1967. "Il Paisano: Immigrant Italian Folktales in Central New York." *New York Folklore Quarterly* 23 (1): 52–64.
- Baldini, Eraldo. 1996. "Pasquetta e Pasquella." In "*Siamo qua da voi signori*": *La Pasquella nel territorio cervese*, edited by Massimo Carli, 9–28. Ravenna: Longo Editore.
- Barthes, Roland. 1997. "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption." In *Food and Culture: A Reader*, edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, 20–27. New York: Routledge.
- Biondi, Angelo. 1981. "La Befana nel soranese e nel pitiglianese." In *La tradizione della Befana nella Maremma di Grosseto*, edited by Roberto Ferretti, 65–102. Grosseto: Comune di Grosseto, Archivio delle tradizioni popolari della Maremma grossetana.
- . 2007. Tape recorded interview. March 17. Cassette tape 2007-SS-001.
- Brown, Linda Keller, and Kay Mussel, eds. 1984. *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press.
- Calvino, Italo. 1956 [1993]. *Fiabe italiane raccolte dalla tradizione popolare durante gli ultimi cento anni e trascritte in lingua dai vari dialetti da Italo Calvino*. Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori.
- Calvino, Italo. 1980. *Italian Folktales*. Translated by George Martin. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Camporesi, Piero. 1989. *Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe*. Translated by David Gentilcore. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Carli, Massimo, ed. 1996. "*Siamo qua da voi signori*": *La Pasquella nel territorio cervese*. Ravenna: Longo Editore.
- Coan, Peter M. 1997. *In Their Own Words: Ellis Island Interviews*. New York: Checkmark Books.
- Cocchiara, Giuseppe. 1956. *Il paese di Cuccagna*. Turin: Einaudi.
- Crialesi, Emanuele, dir. 2006. *Golden Door (Nuovomondo)*. DVD. Miramax.
- Del Giudice, Luisa. 2001. "Mountains of Cheese and Rivers of Wine: *Paesi di Cuccagna* and Other Gastronomic Utopias." In *Imag-*

- ined States: National Identity, Utopia, and Longing in Oral Cultures*, edited by Luisa Del Giudice and Gerald Porter, 11–63. Logan: Utah State University Press.
- Delumeau, J. 1973. *Le Peur en Occident (XIVe–XVIIIe siècles): Une cité assiégée*. Paris: Fayard.
- Diner, Hasia. 2001. *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Douglas, Mary. 1966. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Praeger.
- . 1975. *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology*. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- . 1997. “Deciphering a Meal.” In *Food and Culture: A Reader*, edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, 36–54. New York: Routledge.
- Eustacchi-Nardi, Anna M. 1958. *Contributo allo studio delle tradizioni popolari marchigiane*. Florence: Leo S. Olschki.
- Falassi, Alessandro. 1980. *Folklore by the Fireside: Text and Context of the Tuscan Veglia*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Ferretti, Roberto, ed. 1981a. *Il bruscello dell’innamoramento: secondo il testo adottato dalla Compagnia di Grancia e Vallemaggiore (GR)*. Lucca: Centro per la raccolta, lo studio e la valorizzazione delle tradizioni popolari.
- . 1981b. *La tradizione della Befana nella Maremma di Grosseto*. Grosseto: Comune di Grosseto, Archivio delle tradizioni popolari della Maremma grossetana.
- Firth, John. 1922 [1974]. *Reminiscences of an Orkney Parish*. Stromness: Orkeny Natural History Society.
- Fresta, Mariano. 2003. “Alimentazione e abbigliamento.” In *La Val d’Orcia di Iris: Storia, vita, e cultura dei mezzadri*, edited by Mariano Fresta, 123–132. Montepulciano: Le Balze.
- Galli, Edo, ed. 1996. *Rassegna di befanate nel grossetano: Testi e materiali della tradizione*. Braccagni: Comune di Grosseto.
- Giannini, Giovanni. 1893. “Le Befanate del contado lucchese.” *Archivio per lo studio delle tradizioni popolari* 12: 89–122 and 161–174.
- Glassie, Henry. 1975. *“All Silver and No Brass”: An Irish Christmas Mumming*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

- Grazzini, Nevia. 1995. "La Befanata: Canto cerimoniale di questua." In *...ché stasera è Befania!*, edited by Nevia Grazzini, 25–26. Grosseto: I Portici Editori.
- Gunnell, Terry, ed. 2007. *Masks and Mumming in the Nordic Area*. Uppsala: Kungl, Gustav Adolfs Akademien för svensk folkkultur.
- Harris, Marvin. 1985 [1998]. *Good to Eat: Riddles of Food and Culture*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- "Lamento della povertà per l'estremo freddo del presente anno 1587." 1966. In *Affanni e canzoni del padre di Bertoldo: La poesia popolare di Giulio Cesare Croce*, edited by Massimo Dursi, 115–117. Bologna: Alfa.
- Lancellotti, Arturo. 1951. *Feste tradizionali. Vol. 1, Capodanno, Befana, Candelora, Carnevale, Quaresima, Settimana Santa*. Milan: Società Editrice Libreria.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1997. "The Culinary Triangle." In *Food and Culture: A Reader*, edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, 28–35. New York: Routledge.
- Leydi, Roberto. 1973. *I canti popolari italiani: 120 testi e musiche*. Milan: Arnaldo Mondadori.
- Lindahl, Carl. 2004. "'That's My Day': Cajun Country Mardi Gras in Basile, Louisiana, USA." In *Carnival!*, edited by Barbara Mauldin, 120–143. Santa Fe, NM: Museum of International Folk Art in association with the University of Washington Press.
- Magalotti, Lorenzo. 1693. *Il mendicare abolito nella città di Montalbano da un Pubblico Uffizio di Carità. Con la replica alle principali obiezioni che protebbon farsi contro questo Regolamento*. Florence: Gio. Filippo Cecchi.
- Manciocco, Claudia, and Luigi Manciocco. 2006. *L'incanto e l'arcano: Per una antropologia della Befana*. Rome: Armando Editore.
- Mathias, Elizabeth, and Richard Raspa. 1985. *Italian Folktales in America: The Verbal Art of an Immigrant Woman*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Mauri, Giorgio. 1989. *La befana vien di notte: Miti e riti sacri e profani, glorie e storie antiche e moderne, fatti e misfatti più e meno noti della celebre vecchia*. Legnano: Edicart.
- Montanari, Massimo. 2006. *Food Is Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- . 2009. *Let the Meatballs Rest and Other Stories about Food and Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Mormino, Gary. 1986. *Immigrants on the Hill: Italian Americans in St. Louis, 1882–1982*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Nabhan, Gary Paul. *Songbirds, Truffles, and Wolves: An American Naturalist in Italy*. New York: Pantheon.
- Nizzi, Roberto. 2001. Tape recorded interview. January 1. Cassette tape 2001-SS-001.
- Noyes, Dorothy. 2003. *Fire in the Plaça: Catalan Festival Politics After Franco*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Paffetti, Giacinto. 1636. Archivio di Stato di Firenze; Archivio Mediceo del Principato, file 2778, report of July 18.
- Pampanini Bruno. 2001. Tape recorded interview. Near Pitigliano. January 1. Cassette tape 2001-SS-001.
- Pellegrini, Angelo M. 1962. *The Unprejudiced Palate*. New York: Macmillan.
- Porter, Roy. 1989. "Preface." In *Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe*, written by Piero Camporesi and translated by David Gentilcore. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Priore, Dante. 1985. "La Befanata e la Zinganetta nel Valdarno superiore." *Quaderni della Biblioteca* 7: 3–35.
- Rossi, Alcide. 1966. "Folklore garfagnino: La Befanata." *Lares* 32 (3/4): 155–163.
- Sereni, Emilio. 1997. *History of the Italian Agricultural Landscape*. Translated by R. Burr Litchfield. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Sistri, Alessandro. 1996. "La Pasquella nel territorio cervese." In "*Siamo qua da voi signori*": *La Pasquella nel territorio cervese*, edited by Massimo Carli, 29–37. Ravenna: Longo Editore.
- Soler, Jean. 1997. "The Semiotics of Food in the Bible." In *Food and Culture: A Reader*, edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, 55–66. New York: Routledge.
- Toschi, Paolo. 1963. *Invito al folklore italiano: Le regioni e le feste*. Rome: Studium.
- Uther, Hans-Jörg. 2004. *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography. Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*. 3 vols. *Folklore Fellows Communications*,

- 284–286. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia.
- Valletta, Clement L. 1968. "A Study of Americanization in Carnetta: Italian-American Identity through Three Generations." Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania.
- Vicini, P. E., ed. 1911. *Cronaca Modenese di Gio. Batt. Spaccini (1588–1633). Volume 2*. Modena: Ferraguti.
- Viziani, P. 1608. *I due ultimi libri delle historie della sua patria* Bologna: Eredi di Gio. Rossi.
- Warren, Christopher H. 2017. *All the Noise of It: Living in A Tuscan Hilltown*. N.p.: Conigliera Press.