Banquet with Friends

One of these trips was memorable, also because there was good company. In addition to Antonino’s brother, there were other friends of Andrea’s, almost all failed students, who preferred the accordion to the tormenting pomp of vocabulary. They created the Odyssey by themselves by fighting for their Elena, a beautiful countrywoman, and then reconciling in banquets where the bones of the lambs roasted in the living flame piled up at their feet as under the tables of the heroes of Homer.

One of these banquets was certainly prepared that day, in the sheepfold of the paternal tancas – fenced lands - of Andrea and Cosima. The swineherd shepherds, who had finished their season, were followed by sheep and goats. The sheep grazed the dry asphodel, whose long golden stems cracked between the teeth of the beasts like breadsticks, and the black goats with diabolical heads were outlined on the mother-of-pearl in the rocky peaks. (…)

But the banquet was served in a clearing, on the ground, of course, all surrounded by a colonnade of trunks as a royal hall: for Cosima Andrea prepared a saddle and a saddlebag and a comfortable armchair, and she got the best morsels: for her the lamb’s kidney, tender and sweet as a ripe rowan, for her the top of the cheese roasted on a spit, for her the most
beautiful bunch of early grapes brought specifically for her by her caring brother.

(from the novel *Cosima*, 1937)