

# The Trial of Lucullus

(1939)

by Bertolt Brecht



*Liberated from  
capitalist control  
to educate the masses  
by  
Socialist Stories*

*Characters:*

LUCULLUS, *a Roman general*

THE COURT CRIER

THE JUDGE OF THE DEAD

*Jury of the Dead:* THE TEACHER, THE COURTESAN, THE  
BAKER, THE FISHWIFE, THE FARMER

*Figures on the Frieze:* THE KING, THE QUEEN, TWO GIRLS  
WITH A TABLET, TWO SLAVES WITH A GOLDEN GOD, TWO  
LEGIONARIES, LUCULLUS'S COOK, THE CHERRY-TREE  
BEARER

THE HOLLOW VOICE

AN OLD WOMAN

THE THREEFOLD VOICE

TWO SHADOWS

THE HERALD

THE CROWD: TWO GIRLS, TWO MERCHANTS, TWO WOMEN,  
TWO PLEBEIANS, A DRIVER

CHORUS OF SOLDIERS

CHORUS OF SLAVES

CHILDREN'S CHORUS

## THE FUNERAL PROCESSION

*Noise of a great crowd.*

## THE HERALD:

Hark, the great Lucullus is dead!  
 The general who conquered the East  
 Who overthrew seven kings  
 Who filled our city of Rome with riches.  
 Behind his catafalque  
 Borne by soldiers  
 Walk the most distinguished men of mighty Rome  
 With covered faces, beside it  
 Walks his philosopher, his advocate, and before it  
 Slaves drag a tremendous frieze  
 Setting forth his deeds and destined to be his tombstone.  
 Once more  
 The entire people pays its respects to an amazing lifetime  
 Of victory and conquest  
 And they remember his former triumphal processions.

## SONG OF THE SOLDIERS CARRYING THE CATAFALQUE:

Hold it steady, hold it shoulder-high.  
 See that it does not waver in front of thousands of eyes  
 For now the Lord of the Eastern Earth  
 Betakes himself to the shadows. Take care, do not stumble.  
 That flesh and metal you bear  
 Has ruled the world. (1)

## SLAVES DRAGGING THE FRIEZE:

Careful, do not stumble!  
 You who haul the frieze with the scene of triumph  
 Ay, though the sweat runs down to your eyelids  
 Still keep your hands to the stone! Think, if you drop it  
 It might crumble to dust.

THE CROWD

A GIRL:

See the red plume! No, the big one.

ANOTHER GIRL:

He squints.

FIRST MERCHANT:

All the senators.

SECOND MERCHANT:

All the tailors too.

FIRST MERCHANT:

Why no, this man has pushed on even to India.

SECOND MERCHANT:

But he was finished long ago  
I'm sorry to say.

FIRST MERCHANT:

Greater than Pompey  
Rome would have been lost without him.  
Enormous victories.

SECOND MERCHANT:

Mostly luck.

FIRST WOMAN:

My Reus  
Perished in Asia.  
All this fuss won't bring him back to me.

FIRST MERCHANT:

Thanks to this man  
Many a man made a fortune.

SECOND WOMAN:

My brother's boy too never came home again.

FIRST MERCHANT:

Everyone knows what Rome reaped, thanks to him  
In fame alone.

FIRST WOMAN:

Without their lies  
Nobody would walk into the trap.

FIRST MERCHANT:

Heroism, alas  
Is dying out.

FIRST PLEBEIAN:

When

Will they spare us this twaddle about fame?

SECOND PLEBEIAN:

Three legions in Cappadocia

Not one left to tell the tale.

A DRIVER:

Can

I get through here?

SECOND WOMAN:

No, it's closed off.

FIRST PLEBEIAN:

When we bury our generals

Oxcarts must have patience.

SECOND WOMAN:

They dragged my Pulcher before the judge:

Taxes due.

FIRST MERCHANT:

We can say

Except for him Asia would not be ours today.

FIRST WOMAN:

Has tunnyfish jumped in price again?

SECOND WOMAN:

Cheese too.

*The noise of the crowd increases.*

THE HERALD:

Now

They pass through the arch of triumph

Which the city has built for her great son.

The women hold their children high. The mounted men

Press back the ranks of the spectators.

The street behind the procession lies deserted.

For the last time

The great Lucullus has passed through it.

*The noise of the crowd and the sound of marching fade.*

2

## SUDDEN SILENCE AND RETURN TO NORMALITY

## THE HERALD:

The procession has disappeared. Now  
 The street is full again. From the obstructed side-alleys  
 The carters drive out with their oxcarts. The crowd  
 Returns to its business, chattering. Busy Rome  
 Goes back to work.

3

## IN THE SCHOOLBOOKS

## CHILDREN'S CHORUS:

In the schoolbooks  
 Are written the names of great generals.  
 Whoever wants to emulate them  
 Learns their battles by heart  
 Studies their wonderful lives.  
 To emulate them  
 To rise above the crowd  
 Is our task. Our city  
 Is eager to write our names some day  
 On the tablets of immortality. (2)

4

## THE BURIAL

## THE HERALD:

Outside, on the Appian Way  
 Stands a little structure, built ten years before  
 Meant to shelter the great man  
 In death.  
 Before it, the crowd of slaves that drags the triumphal frieze  
 Turns in.  
 Then the little rotunda with the boxtree hedge receives it.

A HOLLOW VOICE:

Halt, soldiers!

THE HERALD:

Comes a voice  
From the other side of the wall  
Giving orders from now on.

THE HOLLOW VOICE:

Tilt the bier! No one is carried  
Behind this wall. Behind this wall  
Each man goes alone.

THE HERALD:

The soldiers tilt the bier, the General  
Stands up now, a little uncertain.  
His philosopher makes as if to accompany him  
A wise saw on his lips. But . . .

THE HOLLOW VOICE:

Stand back, Philosopher. Behind this wall  
No one heeds your sophistry.

THE HERALD:

Says the voice that gives orders here  
And thereupon the advocate steps forward  
To raise an objection.

THE HOLLOW VOICE:

Overruled.

THE HERALD:

Says the voice that gives orders here. And it says to the  
General:

THE HOLLOW VOICE:

Now step through the gateway.

THE HERALD:

And the General goes to the little gateway  
Stands there a moment, looking about him  
And stares with grave eyes at the soldiers  
Stares at the slaves who haul the sculpture  
Stares at the boxtree, the last green thing. He lingers.  
As the portico stands open, a breath of wind  
Blows in from the street.

*A gust of wind.*

## THE HOLLOW VOICE:

Take your helmet off. Our gateway is low.

## THE HERALD:

And the General takes off his splendid helmet  
 And steps in with bowed head. With a sigh of relief  
 The soldiers crowd out of the burial place, chattering gaily.

5

## DEPARTURE OF THE LIVING

## CHORUS OF THE SOLDIERS:

So long, Lakalles.  
 Now we're quits, old goat.  
 Out of the boneyard  
 Up with the glass!  
 Fame isn't everything  
 You've got to live too.  
 Who'll come along?  
 Down by the dock  
 There's wine and song. You weren't in step.  
 I'll come along.  
 Be sure of that.  
 Who'll pay the bill?  
 They'll chalk it up.  
 Look at his grin!  
 I'm off to the cattle market.  
 To the little brunette? Hey, we'll come along.  
 No, three's a crowd.  
 You'll put her off.  
 Then  
 We're for the dog races.  
 Man  
 That costs money. Not if they know you.  
 I'll come along.  
 Attention! Break ranks!  
 March.



## THE RECEPTION

*The Hollow Voice is the voice of the gatekeeper of the Realm of Shadows. It continues the narration.*

## THE HOLLOW VOICE:

Ever since the newcomer has entered  
 He has stood near the door, motionless, his helmet under  
 his arm  
 Like his own statue.  
 The other dead who are newly arrived  
 Crouch on the bench and wait as they have often waited  
 For good fortune and for death  
 Waited in the tavern until they got their wine  
 Waited at the well until the lover came  
 Waited in the wood, in battle, for the word of command.  
 But the newcomer  
 Does not seem to have learned how to wait.

LUCULLUS *suddenly*:

By Jupiter  
 What does this mean? I stand and wait here.  
 The greatest city on the globe still rings  
 With lamentations for me, and here  
 There is no one to receive me. Outside my war tent  
 Seven kings once waited for me.  
 Is there no order here? (3)

*Pause.*

I demand to be conducted from this place.

*Pause.*

Must I stand here among these people?

*Pause.*

I object. Two hundred armoured ships, five legions  
 Used to advance at the crook of my little finger.

I object.

*Pause.*

## THE HOLLOW VOICE:

No answer but from the bench of those who wait  
 An old woman says:

## THE VOICE OF AN OLD WOMAN WAITING:

Sit down, newcomer.

All that metal you haul, the heavy helmet  
And the breastplate must be tiring.

So sit down.

*Lucullus is silent.*

Don't be arrogant. You can't stand the whole time

You must wait here. My turn comes before yours.

No one can say how long the hearing inside will last.

There's no doubt that each one will be strictly examined

To determine whether he shall be sentenced to go

Down into dark Hades

Or into the Elysian Fields. Sometimes

The trial is quite short. One glance is enough for the judges.

This one here, they say

Has led a blameless life and he was able

To be of use to his fellow men.

With them a person's usefulness counts the most.

They say to him, go take your rest.

Of course with others

The hearing may last for whole days, especially

With those who have sent someone down here to the Realm  
of the Shadows

Before the appointed span of his life was over.

It won't take long with the one who went in just now.

He's a harmless little baker. As for my affair

I'm a little anxious, but put my faith in this -

Among the jury within, they tell me

There are little people who know well enough

How hard life is for those of us in times of war.

My advice to you, newcomer . . .

THE THREEFOLD VOICE *interrupting*:

Tertullia! (4)

## THE HOLLOW VOICE:

The newcomer stands stubbornly on the sill

But the burden of his decorations

His own roaring

And the friendly words of the old woman have changed  
him.

He looks around to see if he is really alone.

Now he goes to the bench after all, but before he can sit  
down

He'll be called. A glance at the old woman  
Was enough for the judge.

THE THREEFOLD VOICE:

Lakalles!

LUCULLUS:

My name is Lucullus! Isn't my name known here?  
I come from a distinguished family  
Of statesmen and generals. Only in the slums  
In the docks and soldiers' taverns, in the unwashed  
Jaws of the vulgar, the scum  
Is my name Lakalles.

THE THREEFOLD VOICE:

Lakalles!

THE HOLLOW VOICE:

And so yet again called  
In the despised language of the slums  
Lucullus, the general  
Who conquered the East  
Who overthrew seven kings  
And filled the city of Rome with riches.  
At nightfall, when Rome sits down to the funeral feast  
Lucullus presents himself before the highest tribunal of the  
Realm of the Shadows.

7

CHOICE OF SPONSOR

THE COURT CRIER:

Before the highest tribunal of the Realm of the Shadows  
appears

General Lakalles, who calls himself Lucullus.

Presided over by the Judge of the Dead

Five jurors pursue the examination:

One, formerly a farmer

One, formerly a slave who was a teacher

One, formerly a fishwife

One, formerly a baker

And one, formerly a courtesan.  
 They sit upon a high bench  
 Without hands to take and without mouths to eat  
 Insensible to magnificence, these long-extinguished eyes  
 Incorruptible, these ancestors of the world-to-come.  
 The Judge of the Dead begins the hearing.

THE JUDGE OF THE DEAD:

Shadow, you shall be heard.  
 You must account for your life among men.  
 Whether you have served them or harmed them  
 Whether we wish to see your face  
 In the Elysian Fields.  
 You need a sponsor.  
 Have you a sponsor in the Elysian Fields?

LUCULLUS:

I propose the great Alexander of Macedon be called.  
 Let him speak to you as an expert  
 On deeds like mine.

THE THREEFOLD VOICE *calls out in the Elysian Fields:*

Alexander of Macedon!  
*Silence.*

THE COURT CRIER:

The person called does not answer.

THE THREEFOLD VOICE:

In the Elysian Fields  
 There is no Alexander of Macedon.

THE JUDGE OF THE DEAD:

Shadow, your expert is unknown  
 In the Fields of the Blessed.

LUCULLUS:

What? He who conquered from Asia to India  
 The never-to-be-forgotten one  
 Who so indelibly pressed his footprint in the globe of the  
 earth  
 The mighty Alexander . . .

THE JUDGE OF THE DEAD:

Is unknown here. (5)

LUCULLUS:

Then I propose

That the frieze from my memorial  
 On which my triumphal procession is set forth, be fetched.  
 But how can it be fetched? Slaves haul it. Surely  
 Entrance is forbidden here  
 To the living.

THE JUDGE OF THE DEAD:

Not to slaves. So little divides them  
 From the dead that one can say  
 They scarcely live. The step from the world above  
 Down to the Realm of the Shadows  
 Is to them a short one.  
 The frieze shall be brought.

8

THE FRIEZE IS PRODUCED

THE HOLLOW VOICE:

His slaves still huddle  
 By the wall, uncertain  
 Where the frieze should go. Until a voice  
 Suddenly speaks through the wall.

THE COURT CRIER:

Come.

THE HOLLOW VOICE:

And changed to shadows  
 By this single word  
 They drag their burden  
 Through the wall with the box hedge.

CHORUS OF SLAVES:

Out of life into death  
 Without protest, we haul the burden.  
 Long ago our time ceased to be ours  
 And the goal of our journey unknown.  
 And so we follow the new voice  
 Like the old. Why question it?

We leave nothing behind; we expect nothing. (6)

THE COURT CRIER:

And so they go through the wall  
For nothing holds them back, neither can this wall keep  
them back.

And they set their burden down  
Before the highest tribunal of the Realm of the Shadows –  
This frieze with the triumphal procession.

The jurymen of the dead, look upon it:

A captured king, sad of countenance

A strange-eyed queen with provocative thighs

A man with a cherry tree, eating a cherry

A golden god, borne by two slaves, very fat

Two girls with a tablet, upon it the names of fifty-three  
cities

A dying legionary, greeting his general

A cook with a fish.

THE JUDGE OF THE DEAD:

Are these your witnesses, Lakalles?

LUCULLUS:

They are. But how shall they speak?

They are stone, they are dumb.

THE JUDGE OF THE DEAD:

Not to us. They shall speak.

Are you ready, you stony shadows

You shapes, to give testimony here?

CHORUS OF FIGURES IN THE FRIEZE:

We figures, stony shadows of vain sacrifice

Once destined to remain above in the daylight

Either to speak or to keep silent

We figures once destined by the conqueror's order to  
portray

Those conquered, robbed of breath

Silenced, forgotten

Are willing to keep silent and willing to speak.

THE JUDGE OF THE DEAD:

Shadow, the witnesses of your greatness

Are ready to testify.

9

## THE HEARING

THE COURT CRIER:

And the General steps forward and  
Points to the king.

LUCULLUS:

Here you see one whom I vanquished.  
In these few days  
His empire crumbled like a hut struck by lightning.  
He began to fly when I appeared on his frontier  
And the first few days of the war  
Were scarcely enough for us both  
To reach the other frontier of his realm.  
So short was the campaign that a ham  
My cook had hung up to smoke  
Was not yet thoroughly cured when I returned.  
And of seven I struck down he was but one.

THE JUDGE OF THE DEAD:

Is that true, O King?

THE KING:

It is true.

THE JUDGE OF THE DEAD:

Your questions, jurors.

THE COURT CRIER:

And the shadowy slave who was once a teacher  
Bends darkly forward and asks:

THE TEACHER:

How did it happen?

THE KING:

As he says. We were attacked  
As the farmer loading hay  
Stood with raised fork  
His half-filled waggon was taken from him  
And strange hands seized the baker's breadloaf  
Before it was fully baked. All that he says  
Concerning the lightning that strikes a hut is true.  
The hut is destroyed. Here  
Is the lightning.

THE TEACHER:

And of seven you were . . .

THE KING:

But one.

THE COURT CRIER:

The jurymen of the dead  
Consider the testimony of the king.

*Silence.*

And the shadow who was once a courtesan  
Puts a question.

THE COURTESAN:

You there, O Queen  
How did you get here?

THE QUEEN:

One day by the Taurion I  
Went to bathe there early  
From among the olive trees  
Down came fifty strangers.  
Those men were my conquerors.

Had no weapon but a sponge  
In the limpid water.  
And their armour shielded me  
Only for a moment.  
Quickly I was conquered. (7)

THE COURTESAN:

And why do you walk here in the procession?

THE QUEEN:

Oh, as a proof of the victory.

THE COURTESAN:

What victory, the one over you?

THE QUEEN:

And the lovely Taurion.

THE COURTESAN:

And what does he call a triumph?

THE QUEEN:

That the king, my husband  
Could not with his whole army  
Protect his property  
From prodigious Rome.



THE COURTESAN:

Sister, then our fates are the same.  
 For I too  
 Found prodigious Rome  
 No shield against prodigious Rome.

THE COURT CRIER:

And there was silence. The jurymen  
 Of the dead consider the testimony of the queen.  
*Silence.*  
 And the Judge of the Dead  
 Turns to the General.

THE JUDGE OF THE DEAD:

Shadow, do you wish to proceed?

LUCULLUS:

Yes, I mark well how the conquered  
 Have a sweet voice. However  
 Once it was rougher. This king here  
 Who captures your sympathy, when he was in power  
 Was especially ruthless. (8)  
 In taxes and tribute  
 He took no less than I. The cities  
 I snatched from him  
 Lost nothing in him, but Rome won  
 Fifty-three cities, thanks to me.

TWO YOUNG GIRLS WITH A TABLET:

With streets and people and houses  
 Temples and waterworks  
 We sprang out of the landscape.  
 Today only our names remain on this tablet.

THE COURT CRIER:

And the shadowy juror who was once a baker  
 Bends darkly forward and asks:

THE BAKER:

Why so?

GIRL WITH A TABLET:

One day at noon an uproar broke loose.  
 Into the streets swept a flood  
 Whose waves were men, and carried  
 Our goods away. In the evening

Only a foul smoke marked the spot  
That was once a city.

THE BAKER:

And what then  
Did he carry away, he who sent the flood and says  
He gave fifty-three cities to Rome?

THE COURT CRIER:

And the slaves who haul the golden god  
Began to tremble and cry:

THE SLAVES:

Us.  
Once happy, now cheaper than oxen  
To haul away booty, ourselves booty.

GIRL WITH A TABLET:

Formerly the builders of fifty-three cities, of which  
Only name and smoke remain.

LUCULLUS:

Yes, I carried them off.  
There were two hundred and fifty thousand  
Formerly foes but now no longer foes.

THE SLAVES:

Formerly men, but now no longer men.

LUCULLUS:

And with them I carried away their god  
So that the whole earth might see our gods  
Were greater than all other gods.

THE SLAVES:

And the god was very welcome  
Because he was of gold and weighed two hundredweight  
And we too are each worth a piece of gold  
The size of a fingerbone.

THE COURT CRIER:

And the shadowy juryman  
Who was once a baker  
In Marsilia, the city by the sea  
Bends forward and says quietly:

THE BAKER:

Then we write to your credit, shadow  
Simply this: Brought gold to Rome.

THE COURT CRIER:

And there is silence.  
The jurymen of the dead  
Consider the testimony of the cities.

THE JUDGE OF THE DEAD:

The accused seems tired.  
I allow a recess.

10

ROME

THE COURT CRIER:

And the judge goes away.  
The accused sits down.  
He crouches by the railing  
And leans back his head. He is exhausted, but he overhears  
Talk behind the door  
Where new shadows have appeared.

A SHADOW:

I came to grief through an oxcart.

LUCULLUS *softly*:

Oxcart.

THE SHADOW:

It brought a load of sand to a building site.

LUCULLUS *softly*:

Building site. Sand.

ANOTHER SHADOW:

Isn't it meal time now?

LUCULLUS *softly*:

Meal time?

FIRST SHADOW:

I had my bread and onions  
With me. I haven't a room any more.  
The horde of slaves  
They herd in from every spot under heaven  
Has ruined the shoemaking business.

SECOND SHADOW:

I too was a slave.

Say rather, the lucky  
Catch the unlucky's bad luck.

LUCULLUS *somewhat louder*:

You there, is there wind up above?

SECOND SHADOW:

Hark, someone's asking a question.

FIRST SHADOW *loudly*:

Whether there's wind up above? Perhaps.

There may be in the gardens.

In the suffocating alleys

You don't notice it.

## II

THE HEARING IS CONTINUED

THE COURT CRIER:

The jurymen return.

The hearing begins again.

And the shadow that was once a fishwife  
Speaks.

THE FISHWIFE:

There was talk of gold.

I too lived in Rome.

Yet I never noticed any gold where I lived.

I'd like to know where it went.

LUCULLUS:

What a question!

Should I and my legions set out

To capture a new stool for a fishwife?

THE FISHWIFE:

Though you brought nothing to us in the fish market

Still you took something from us in the fish market:

Our sons.

THE COURT CRIER:

And the jurywoman

Speaks to the warriors in the frieze.

THE FISHWIFE:

Tell me, what happened to you in the two Asias?

FIRST WARRIOR:

I ran away.

SECOND WARRIOR:

And I was wounded.

FIRST WARRIOR:

I dragged him along.

SECOND WARRIOR:

So then he fell too.

THE FISHWIFE:

Why did you leave Rome?

FIRST WARRIOR:

I was hungry.

THE FISHWIFE:

And what did you get there?

SECOND WARRIOR:

I got nothing.

THE FISHWIFE:

You stretch out your hands.  
Is that to greet your general?

SECOND WARRIOR:

It was to show him  
They were still empty.

LUCULLUS:

I protest.  
I rewarded the legionaries  
After each campaign.

THE FISHWIFE:

But not the dead.

LUCULLUS:

I protest.  
How can war be judged  
By those who do not understand it?

THE FISHWIFE:

I understand it. My son  
Fell in the war.  
I was a fishwife in the market at the Forum.  
One day it was reported that the ships  
Returning from the Asian war  
Had docked. I ran from the market place

And I stood by the Tiber for many hours  
 Where they were being unloaded and in the evening  
 All the ships were empty and my son  
 Came down none of the gangplanks.  
 Since it was chilly by the harbour at night  
 I fell into a fever, and in the fever sought my son  
 And ever seeking him more deeply  
 I grew more chilled, died, came here  
 Into the Realm of Shadows, and still sought him.  
 Faber, I cried, for that was his name.  
 And I ran and ran through shadows  
 And from shadow to shadow  
 Crying Faber, until a gatekeeper over there  
 In the camp of fallen warriors  
 Caught me by the sleeve and said:  
 Old woman, there are many Fabers here, many  
 Mothers' sons, many, deeply mourned  
 But they have forgotten their names  
 Which only served to line them up in the army  
 And are no longer needed here. And their mothers  
 They do not wish to meet again  
 Because they let them go to the bloody war.  
 And I stood, held by my sleeve  
 And my cries died out in my mouth.  
 Silently I turned away, for I desired no longer  
 To look upon my son's face.

THE COURT CRIER:

And the Judge of the Dead  
 Seeks the eyes of the jurymen and announces:

THE JUDGE OF THE DEAD:

The court recognises that the mother of the fallen  
 Understands war.

THE COURT CRIER:

The jurymen of the dead  
 Consider the testimony of the warriors.  
*Silence.*

THE JUDGE OF THE DEAD:

But the jurywoman is moved  
 And in her trembling hands

The scales may tip. She needs  
A recess.

12

ROME, ONCE AGAIN

THE COURT CRIER:

And again

The accused sits down and listens  
To the talk of the shadows behind the door.  
Once again a breath is wafted in  
From the world above.

SECOND SHADOW:

And why did you run so?

FIRST SHADOW:

To make an enquiry. It got about that they were recruiting  
Legionaries in the taverns by the Tiber for the war in the  
West

Which is now to be conquered. The land is called Gaul.

SECOND SHADOW:

Never heard of it.

FIRST SHADOW:

Only the big folks know these countries.

13

THE HEARING IS CONTINUED

THE COURT CRIER:

And the Judge smiles at the jurywoman  
Calls the accused and regards him sadly.

THE JUDGE OF THE DEAD:

Our time runs out. You do not make use of it.  
Anger us no more with your triumphs!  
Have you no witnesses  
To any of your weaknesses, mortal?  
Your business goes badly. Your virtues

Seem to be of little use.

Perhaps your weaknesses will leave some loopholes  
In the chain of violent deeds.

I counsel you, shadow  
Recollect your weaknesses.

THE COURT CRIER:

And the jurymen who were once a baker  
Put a question.

THE BAKER:

Yonder I see a cook with a fish.  
He seems cheerful. Cook  
Tell us how you came to be in the triumphal procession.

THE COOK:

Only to show  
That even while waging war  
He found time to discover a recipe for cooking fish.  
I was his cook. Often  
I think of the beautiful meat  
The gamefowl and the black venison  
Which he made me roast.  
And he not only sat at table  
But gave me a word of praise  
Stood over the pots with me  
And himself mixed a dish.  
Lamb *à la* Lucullus  
Made our kitchen famous.  
From Syria to Pontus  
They spoke of Lucullus's cook.

THE COURT CRIER:

And the juror who was once a teacher says:

THE TEACHER:

What is it to us that he liked to eat?

THE COOK:

But he let me cook  
To my heart's content. I thank him for it.

THE BAKER:

I understand him, I who was a baker.  
How often I had to mix bran with the dough  
Because my customers were poor. This fellow here



Could be an artist.

THE COOK:

Thanks to him!

In the triumph

He ranked me next to the kings

And gave my art recognition. That is why I call him  
human. (9)

And I know

That in Amisus, the daughter city of splendid Athens  
Brimming with art treasures and books

His rapacious troops promised not to burn it.

Wet with tears he returned to his supper.

That too was human, mark you.

THE COURT CRIER:

There was silence. The jurymen consider  
The testimony of the cook.

*Silence.*

And the jurymen who was once a farmer

Puts a question.

THE FARMER:

Over there is someone too who carries a fruit tree.

THE TREE BEARER:

This is a cherry tree.

We brought it from Asia. In the triumphal procession

We carried it along. And we planted it

On the slopes of the Apennines.

THE FARMER:

Oh, so it was you, Lakalles, who brought it?

I once planted it too, but I did not know

That you introduced it.

THE COURT CRIER:

And with a friendly smile

The jurymen who was once a farmer

Discusses with the shadow

Who was once a general

The cherry tree.

THE FARMER:

It needs little soil.

LUCULLUS:

But it doesn't like the wind.

THE FARMER:

The red cherries have more meat.

LUCULLUS:

And the black are sweeter.

THE FARMER:

My friends, this of all the detestable souvenirs  
 Conquered in bloody battle  
 I call the best. For this sapling lives.  
 It is a new and friendly companion  
 To the vine and the abundant berrybush  
 And growing with the growing generations  
 Bears fruit for them. And I congratulate you  
 Who brought it to us. When all the booty of conquest  
 From both Asias has long mouldered away  
 This finest of all your trophies  
 Renewed each year for the living  
 Shall in spring flutter its white-flowered branches  
 In the wind from the hills.

14

## THE WHEAT AND THE CHAFF (10)

THE JUDGE OF THE DEAD:

And so I close the hearing.

Among your witnesses, shadow

The most brilliant did not serve you best. In the end  
 however

Some small ones came forward. Not wholly empty

Were your bloody hands. Of course your

Best contribution was a very costly one; the cherry tree:

You could have paid for that conquest with just one more  
 man.

But eighty thousand were what you sent below. Against  
 that

We must set a few happy moments for your cook, tears  
 For damaged books and suchlike trivialities.

Alas, all that violence and victory serves to extend just one  
realm

The realm of shadows!

THE JURORS OF THE DEAD:

But we who are chosen to judge the dead

Observe, on their departure from the earth, what they gave  
it.

THE COURT CRIER:

And from the high bench they rise up

The spokesmen of the world-to-be

Of those with many hands, to take

Of those with many mouths, to eat

Of the rarely gullible, eagerly gathering

Joyful world-to-be.

The court

Withdraws for consultation.