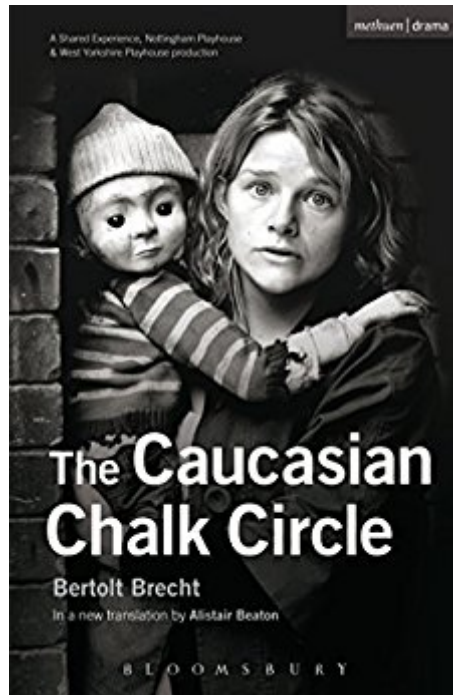


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The Caucasian Chalk Circle (Modern Plays)



Synopsis

The city burns in the heat of civil war and a servant girl sacrifices everything to protect an abandoned child. But when peace is finally restored, the boy's mother comes to claim him. Calling upon the ancient tradition of the Chalk Circle, a comical judge sets about resolving the dispute. But in a culture of corruption and deception, who wins? Written by the grand master of storytelling and peopled with vivid and amusing characters, this is one of the greatest plays of the last century. This *Caucasian Chalk Circle* is translated by award-winning writer Alistair Beaton, who also wrote the bitingly witty stage play *Feelgood* and the celebrated TV dramas *The Trial of Tony Blair* and *A Very Social Secretary*. The play was toured by Shared Experience in 2009.

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Customer Reviews

Brecht's "The Caucasian Chalk Circle," written in self-imposed exile towards the end of World War II, is a story within a play, in which a bard, or singer, interrupts a group of Caucasian farmers arguing over ownership of land that has been ravaged by Nazi tanks and entertains them with a relevant tale of yore. In a city called Grusinia, the Governor is executed in a coup and his wife flees

for her life, abandoning their baby son Michael, who is picked up by a humble kitchen maid named Grusha. Having recently betrothed herself to a soldier named Simon who is away on duty, she sets out on a cross-country journey with the infant to get help from her brother, a farmer in a distant village. Lavrenti, her brother, suggests she get married immediately to avoid suspicion that the baby is hers out of wedlock, and the most available candidate is a local wretched peasant. After living with this man for a couple of years, Grusha is apprehended by soldiers who have come to take young Michael, the sole heir of the deposed Governor's estate, back to Grusinia. The case of Michael's custody, contested by the Governor's wife against Grusha, is brought to trial, where the judge, a drunk named Azdak whose unofficial appointment to this position is a farce, decrees that the boy will be placed inside a circle drawn with chalk on the courtroom floor, and that the woman who is able to pull him out of the circle is the real mother. (Study the judge's exact words when you read this.) Although the story is of medieval Chinese origin, Brecht's play is a sort of refashioning of the Biblical anecdote about Solomon and expands the idea by supplying a whole backstory to the women's argument.

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