

Chapter Three

The comparison among these three indomitable mothers

Many criticisms about Brecht's plays, such as Walter Benjamin's and Fredric Jameson's, focus mainly on stage techniques and agitprop functions: "The supreme task of an epic production is to give expression to the relationship between the action being staged and everything that is involved in the act of staging per se The first commandment of epic theatre is that 'the one who shows'—that is, the actor—'shall be shown'." (Benjamin 11) The actors should act objectively through the alienation effect, and "Brecht offers us a world in which that practice is entertaining, and includes its own pedagogy as a member of the class it subsumes—the teaching of practice also being a practice in its own right, and thereby 'participating' in the very satisfactions it holds out to its student practitioners." (Jameson 3) However, this section will be a close study to explore some of the similarities and the differences among these three mothers namely, Vlassova (in *The Mother*), Fierling (in *Mother Courage and Her Children*), and Grusha the maid (in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*). Even though they are all loving mothers and living in chaotic wartime, their motherhood situations are different: Pavel is Vlassova's only son, Fierling is the mother of her three children but each of them has a different father, and Grusha raises and loves Michael as her own son but they were not consanguineous.

I. The situation of being single mothers

Raising children is a special and complicated task for a woman in the postnatal period; for she has to learn and adapt herself to undertake and further to cope with it adequately. In psychology mothers are seen as essential providers of crucial environmental experiences for their children. This is associated with the

‘professionalization’ of motherhood and pressures on mothers to perform well (Phoenix 216). Therefore, being a single mother is a more difficult task for these three mothers, and we should first of all acknowledge their plight. A critic points out their dilemmas: without strong family networks, decent part-time employment opportunities, extensive and high-quality care for children of all ages, and/or government income support, lone mothers cannot possibly compete with married parents for the resources they need to raise children (Albelda 3). Therefore, when compared with a family with parents, Vlassova, Fierling and Grusha’s seem to fall behind at the starting point. However, lone mothers are not alone in one important sense—they have children who can in themselves be sources of support (Albelda 1). This explains how, in spite of quite a few drawbacks in their imperfect families, these mothers still play their roles well and keep their own families intact.

Individually speaking, Vlassova’s dedication to her son not only proves that she is a capable single mother but also opens a Communist door for herself. When Vlassova witnesses some workers being shot by the police in a peaceful demonstration, she is shocked by the brutality of the police and her attitude dramatically changes at this crucial moment. It is the moment that floodgates of habituation collapse, and Marxist formulations which had meant nothing are suffused suddenly with meaning. They explain the nature of the factory system, whence her living and her misery come (*The Mother* 20). Being inspired by the fearless crowd she determines, on this turning-point, to fight for the workers.

THE MOTHER. Let me have the flag, Smilgin, I said. Give

it here! I will take it. All of this must be changed! (*The Mother* 70)

The Mother’s crying out for a revolution indicates a poor single mother’s eagerness for a communist solution.

In many ways, Mother Courage is totally different from Vlassova in *The Mother*. First, she is an itinerant merchant who lives off the troops of both sides during the Thirty Years War. She uses all her shrewdness and tenacity to retain her goods wagon, the symbol of, as well as the means of, her family's survival. Second, Mother Courage praises all sorts of ways to survive, because the only value of a person is in trying to survive in the chaos. "A living man can create his own value, but a dead one cannot" is her creed. Nevertheless, it is not cowardice that earns her the nickname of "Mother Courage":

MOTHER COURAGE. They call me Mother Courage 'cause

I was afraid I'd be ruined, so I drove through the
bombardment of Riga like a madwoman, with fifty
loaves of bread in my cart. They were going moldy,
what else could I do? (*Mother Courage* 25)

Obviously, her thoughts are not on courage but on business. Mother Courage has a remarkable endurance, vitality, and ability to go on in spite of adverse circumstances (Kenney 59). This single mother understands that she is the only support for her family, and she can not be a coward when she senses any threat to her property.

The best example is in Scene 4 where Mother Courage sings "*The Song of the Great Capitulation*". The song here is not only used as a device to estrange the audience but also illustrates the transition of Mother Courage's state of mind. Mother Courage and the other two mothers have their own ambitions and prospects in spite of the situational difficulties. Therefore, Mother Courage reflects on her many sorrows by "*The Song of the Great Capitulation*". Her worldly philosophy develops from observing the brutality of human nature in war. Also at the beginning of this scene, she advises a young soldier that the priority in war is to save his own life rather

than to curse his Captain, because the Captain has stolen his reward money and is spending it on brandy and whores. Mother Courage can see that the young soldier is impulsive, which can not help the situation. Mother Courage feels many times, as does the young soldier, that she is trapped in unfair situations. Being the only mainstay in her family, this single mother has no choice but to capitulate to the unjust treatment. When she experiences the cruelty of the war, she realizes that she could not keep her ambitions all the time. Everyone must yield to the reality sometimes to save his or her life. For Yvette, beauty is her tool to keep surviving while Mother Courage's tool is the wagon. Just as she sings in *The Song of the Great Capitulation*:

“And the day soon came when I was to discover

They had me just where they wanted me.” (*Mother Courage* 68)

Also being a single mother, Grusha possesses a rather broad sense in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Baxandall, the translator of *The Mother*, considers that “*The Caucasian Chalk Circle* stresses the possibilities that motherhood affords for the improvement of man's condition. A child, abandoned to almost certain death by his genuine blood mother, is awarded by a judge to the custody of Grusha, a woman who rescued him and took good care of him for several years. This is an explicit connection between morality and the realization of potentials.” (*The Mother* 14)

This broad sense indicates that Grusha's kindness drives her to take Michael out of the danger (morality) and Michael's survival under Grusha's protection (the realization of potentials) come together.

Grusha shows up as a maid in the governor's house and a faithful love of Simon at the beginning of the play. Even if she understands the setbacks she will face by taking Michael the baby away with her, Grusha still selflessly provides him with food and shelter, like the warmth from a mother. Just as Grusha stated her laborious task

of being a single mother when she claims for the custody of Michael in the final act:

GRUSHA. I brought him up like the priest says 'according to my best knowledge and conscience'. I always found him something to eat. Most of the time he had a roof over his head. And I went to such trouble for him. (*Chalk Circle* 199)

Only after suffering many hardships together with Michael, does she finally decide to adopt him as her son. Therefore, she is the only protagonist who shows up as a foster mother in these three plays.

II. Interactions with their children

As for Vlassova and Mother Courage, they have to interact with their children. It is said that many children still stay close to their mothers, even by the time they reach adolescence, but for some, and especially boys, their worlds may draw them apart (Phoenix 222). This viewpoint can persuasively explain why, when Pavel and his co-workers are planning to print leaflets in Act 2, Pavel reminds them not to let his mother know their doings because Pavel understands his task is dangerous and tries to keep his mother out of this trouble.

PAVEL. Talk quietly. It is better if my mother doesn't hear us. I have never told her anything about these things. She's no longer young. And she couldn't be of use in any case. (*The Mother* 41)

Obviously, Vlassova's main concerns are for the safety of her son and the domestic expenses. She thinks her son's covert operations are no good because she senses that what they are doing is not trying to make a living.

THE MOTHER. . . . Pavel, I don't want to have the landlord noticing how people come

here at five in the morning to print things. That won't

help in the least to pay our rent. (*The Mother* 41)

She understands the wages which her son receives from the factory have been cut again and again, but she can not figure out the reason for this happening. Poor women are often too uneducated, neglectful and immoral to enjoy a heightened status (Longhurst 118). Although Vlassova is not an immoral character, she is obviously excluded from her son's private life.

Later, Vlassova is irritated when she knows that Pavel's friends are going to ask him to hand out the printed leaflets in the factory next day. Facing his mother's displeasure, Pavel wants Masha to explain to her about the importance of handing out leaflets to others.

PAVEL (*to* MASHA). Tell her the leaflets have to be handed

out on account of Sidor; so he will be let free. (*The Mother* 47)

Pavel is clever enough to bring up this excuse, taking Masha as a mediator, and hopes his mother would be persuaded by it. And indeed Vlassova decides voluntarily to undertake the job of handing out leaflets herself. However, her motive is not to save Masha's brother but keep her son away from danger; for she understands her stubborn son, and nothing could stop him from undertaking his mission. This mission also concerns Pavel as a son. He clearly knows that if he assents to let his mother undertake this job, she would be in danger. Since both his mother and the mission are important to him, this dilemmatic situation makes him hesitate. Thus, Pavel asks Masha to weigh the situation again:

PAVEL. It's up to you to weigh the advantages for or

against. Please, I ask you, don't make me decide on

my mother's offer. (*The Mother* 49)

Facing this dilemma, Pavel obviously can not make a decision.

Although most mothers may be shut out when they try to get involved in their children's affairs, their solicitude does not stop. As for Vlassova, no matter how eager she is to understand Communism, or how she tries to advocate the pro-proletarian ideas, her son's safety is always the top priority in her mind when she talks to Ivan Vessovchikov:

THE MOTHER. I never know just what he may be doing or
what is being done to him; that is the worst of it. For
instance, I don't even know if they give him enough
to eat or if maybe he is cold. (*The Mother* 80)

However, there is a change brewing in the interaction between Vlassova and her son. Later, when she visits Pavel in prison with the purpose of learning the names of peasants who sympathize with the movement, she tries to memorize these names and addresses in order to persuade more people to fight with her. This meeting illustrates the shift in position of Vlassova from a mother to a comrade of her son.

The song *PRAISE FOR THE COMMON CAUSE* which is recited by Vlassova not only brings the audience back to their family relationship but also foreshadows Pavel's pitiful end.

THE MOTHER (*recites*).

PRAISE FOR THE COMMON CAUSE

How often you hear
how quickly the mothers lose their sons;
but I have kept my son.
How have I kept him? Through a third, the cause.
He and I were two; the third it was,

the common cause commonly driving us, that is what
united us. (*The Mother* 105)

After Pavel was shot when he tried to cross the border, their physical interaction may cease but Vlassova finds a cause that can bind herself and her son spiritually. Their relationship has changed from being distant to contemporaneous and from being separate to united; because their love has been sublimated from the family relationship to the social movement, especially working people, for the common cause is the social justice that everyone should understand and fight for.

Shifting from Vlassova in the Russian worker's revolution to Mother Courage in the Thirty Years War, Mother Courage's interactions with her children are more diversified. Mother Courage has three children from three different men, and her communication with each of her children is different. Each of them has his or her own personality. Swiss Cheese is not very bright, but is honest. Although Katrin cannot speak, she is kind. Eilif's bravery makes him a natural choice for the army (Kenney 59). However, Mother Courage loses her children one by one while she is making bargains. Notice that Mother Courage is engaged in haggling of one sort or another when Eilif enlists, when Swiss Cheese is shot, when Eilif appears on his way to be executed, and when Katrin is killed (Kenney 65).

Risking her life to protect her goods earns her a nickname. However, it does not mean that she hopes her children also should be courageous in danger. Throughout this play Mother Courage always gives an important lesson to her children, that is, contrary to her behavior, to stay away from danger. Therefore, she slaps Eilif with anger, because she wants him to surrender instead of risking his life to be a hero:

MOTHER COURAGE. . . . (*She gives him*

a box on the ear.)

EILIF (*his hand on his cheek*). Because I took the oxen?

MOTHER COURAGE. No. Because you didn't surrender

when the four peasants let fly at you and tried to

make mincemeat of you! Didn't I teach you to take

care of yourself? You Finnish devil, you! (*Mother Courage 41*)

It is not about fighting for honor, but rather about saving himself from a dangerous situation. Here, her starting point is the same as Vlassova's at the beginning of *The Mother*. Both mothers become worried and angry when their children deviate from their expectations.

As a consequence, Mother Courage possesses three children with different personalities; she scolds Eilif for trying to be a hero but, in a different manner, she protects her daughter from being hurt by love. Her experience also drives her to warn Yvette not to mention any love affair in front of Katrin.

MOTHER COURAGE. Now don't you start again with your

friend Peter and how it all happened—in front of

my innocent daughter.

YVETTE. She's the one that should hear it. So she'll get

hardened against love.

MOTHER COURAGE. That's something no one ever gets

hardened against. (*Mother Courage 44*)

Mother Courage's response shows that she had experienced some exotic love affairs, as her account of the origins of her children indicates Mother Courage's "Lovers come and lovers go, but Mother Courage endures" (Kenney 59). Mother Courage gets angry with Eilif and warns Yvette, because she doesn't want her children to expose

themselves to danger.

However, a responsible mother does not necessarily well know what's on her children's mind. Mother Courage adopts a metaphor to encourage and comfort her daughter.

MOTHER COURAGE. . . . Like with trees: the
tall, straight ones are cut down for roof timber, and
the crooked ones can enjoy life. So this wound here
is really a piece of luck. (*Mother Courage* 81)

Indeed, this plausible metaphor tells people to face the reality of life. Mother Courage asks her daughter to accept her fate even if her face is scarred and her virginity has been violated. Mother Courage only wishes she could understand what goes on in her dumb daughter's mind. It is hard for all three single mothers because they do not have husbands to consult with when their children are in trouble.

At the beginning of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, when the governor's wife prepares to flee the palace, her attention is more on those fancy dresses than on her only child. She demands one of her maids, who is taking care of Michael, to put down the child to get her boots.

THE GOVERNOR'S WIFE. . . . How's Michael? Asleep?

THE WOMAN WITH THE CHILD. Yes, madam.

THE GOVERNOR'S WIFE. Then put him down a moment and
get my little saffron-coloured boots from the bedroom. I
need them for the green dress. (*The WOMAN puts down the
CHILD and goes off.*) (*Chalk Circle* 134)

This is a crucial moment which indicates that the governor's wife is forfeiting her right to be a mother for her child. Her clothes-fetish dooms her to lose the custody

of her son in the future.

In the beginning of her flee, out of desperation, Grusha tries to give the baby her breast to suck, but it does not work. Therefore, Grusha has no choice but to pay two piastres, an unreasonable price, to the old peasant in exchange for a little milk. Besides this case, risking her life to cross a dilapidated bridge with the baby and marrying a dying peasant in order to get shelter, manifests her resolution to protect Michael, the baby. As we can see, all her sacrifices are to meet this baby's needs. It can be explained by Miller's positive comment on mothering which "is hard—and often lonely, isolating and undervalued—work as it is currently configured in the West. But for all that, the positive dimensions of loving a child and unconditionally being loved back can involve a profound sense of having achieved something worthwhile, leading to a deeply meaningful, special life-long relationship" (Miller 138).

Different family situations lead these three mothers to interact with their children in different ways. Distributing leaflets for Pavel and accompanying him to the demonstration are triggers for Vlassova to devote herself to the revolution. The changing of Vlassova's prospects leads her to fight for the values of the working class. She is actually enlightened by her son, Pavel, who acts as a catalyst to stimulate Vlassova from an ordinary mother to a radical revolutionist, from ignorance to understanding. However, in *Mother Courage and Her Children*, Mother Courage's interactions with her children are more complicated. While she is busy with her business and bargaining, her son Eilif is led away by the recruiting officer; by haggling the ransom with a corrupt sergeant too long her other son, Swiss Cheese, is executed by the army; and the business keeps her away so she is unable to prevent Kattrin from sacrificing herself to save the town people. Different situations lead all

three of her children to their ends. As for Grusha, it is because of her effort that the baby Michael can survive the revolt and grow up safely. Grusha's kindness and responsibility earn the reward for herself of being Michael's legal mother.

III. Maternal love reveals in different situations

Before studying these mothers' love, we should have a basic understanding of maternity. Longhurst's *Maternities: Gender, Bodies and Space* explains that the word "maternity" carries with it several different meanings. First, it is sometimes used to refer to the state of being pregnant; the period from conception to birth when a woman carries a developing fetus in her uterus. Second, it is used to refer to the kinship relation between an offspring and the mother. Third, the term is used to refer to the quality of having or showing the tenderness and warmth and affection of or befitting a 'proper' or 'good' mother (Longhurst 4). Obviously, the main point of this thesis focuses on the latter two.

From a general social perspective, the archetype of a good mother is associated with the principles of life; birth, warmth, nourishment, protection and so on (Guerin 187). It is out of concern for protection that when Vlassova is aware of her family financial crisis, she voluntarily becomes frugal.

THE MOTHER. If they take still another kopek away from him, I'd rather not eat myself. (*The Mother* 42)

After the unpleasant visit of those police officers, Vlassova again worries about her son's well being.

MASHA. Are you very much frightened, Mrs. Vlassova?

THE MOTHER. Yes. I can see that Pavel is on the wrong path. (*The Mother* 46)

As an ill-educated housewife, Vlassova loves her son without realizing the meaning of

the movement.

THE MOTHER. Fighting? I am hardly a young woman and

I am not a fighter. If I can manage to scrape together

my three kopeks, I'm happy. There is fight enough

for me. (*The Mother* 50)

In her mind, the priorities are to support the family and to keep her son away from danger. Even before Vlassova can understand what the real threat to her family is, she functions according to the precept requiring that a mother should keep her son out of trouble (*The Mother* 20).

However, Vlassova realizes the importance of revolution only step by step. At first she was disturbed to see her son in the company of revolutionary workers (*The Mother* 40). Only on impulse did she join the May Day demonstration and there she witnessed those workers being shot. Following the arrest of her son, Pavel, she visited him in prison in order to learn the names of the peasants who sympathized with the movement, so she could send newspapers to them. When Pavel escapes from the prison, he sees his mother for the last time in the teacher Ivanovitch's home. Both Vlassova and the teacher can sense the danger ahead of Pavel:

TEACHER. God goes with him, Vlassova.

THE MOTHER. I'm not so sure. (*The Mother* 105)

Only when Vlassova is informed that her son has been shot during his fleeing, does she confirm her belief in revolution and does what her son endeavored to do before his death. It is very sad when other women ask her about a photograph of Pavel, the only one Vlassova has is from the warrant for his arrest. Nevertheless, his death is not merely a buffer in Vlassova's life, but makes Vlassova further strengthen her belief in the liberation of the working class.

In Act 12, Vlassova keeps shouting antiwar slogans as the soldiers are marching off to war; she is badly beaten by the police. Because her love for Pavel has been sublimated, to practice her son's unfulfilled wish and to tie their hearts together closely becomes her aspiration in the future.

In the introduction to Lee Baxandall's translation of *The Mother* he indicates the motherly types in Brecht are, more or less, selflessly disposed actions, including Vlassova, Grusha, even Katrin. Those motherly characters generally display such qualities as impulsiveness, openness to experience, unusual energy and disregard for the costs of responsibility (*The Mother* 15); but Mother Courage is excluded from this grand view, because in many instances the environment affects the performance of Mother Courage's acts.

For Mother Courage, surviving is most important; therefore, she does not want to identify her son, Swiss Cheese, in order to save the life of her daughter and herself at the end of Act 3. Although Catholic officers recognize that Swiss Cheese is the paymaster in a Protestant regiment, Mother Courage denies the relationship between her and her son which makes her feel very painful. In fact, Swiss Cheese's execution is caused by Mother Courage's delaying to buy the Sergeant off, as she says: "I believe—I've haggled too long" (*Mother Courage* 64). For Mother Courage, making a choice between Swiss Cheese and her survival is a real struggle between her maternal love and reality.

This indomitable mother's stinginess can also be seen when a peasant needs linen to bind his wound, Mother Courage is unwilling to tear her new shirts as a substitute for bandages. Mother Courage is not completely cold hearted, but she has to be shrewd in business to survive. Brecht is only trying to show us the conditions in wartime. This playwright does not intend to teach the audience moral lessons but

rather to present the moral reactions of common people in difficult times.

When Mother Courage hears the news of peace, she has a complicated feeling toward it. Although she can only make money in war, but in peace, she and her two surviving children can live a less dangerous life.

MOTHER COURAGE. . . . I'm glad

about the peace even though I'm ruined. At least

I've got two of my children through the war. (*Mother Courage* 84)

After all, children are important to their parents no matter what situations they are in, this is a general law from past till now. This also explains why Mother Courage breathes with a sigh of relief:

MOTHER COURAGE. . . . If only we could find

a place where there's no shooting, me and my chil-

dren—what's left of 'em—we might rest a while.

(*Mother Courage* 96)

After wandering for years, she is more or less aware that this prolonged war is not really good for her. Her ultimate desire is to find a peaceful place for herself and her daughter. In this very moment, the cook tries to persuade Mother Courage to leave her daughter behind and go with him to take care of an inn he inherited in Utrecht. However, Mother Courage rejects it unless the dumb Katrin could go with them. Therefore, she rebukes Katrin when Katrin prepares to leave her mother in order not to become a burden for her mother.

Unfortunately, Mother Courage loses her daughter in the same situation as she lost her sons before. When she is in town for business, Katrin is shot and killed as she tries to warn the people in town by beating a drum on the roof. Again Mother Courage loses her Katrin because she must look after her business in town. If she

had stayed with her daughter, she might have prevented Katrin going up to the roof.

Just like the old peasants' comment on Katrin's death to Mother Courage:

PEASANTS. If you hadn't gone off to the town to get your

cut, maybe it wouldn't have happened. (*Mother Courage* 110)

In the end, Mother Courage has lost all her three children. Although she possesses a strong maternal love toward her children, she still could not save them when their lives are threatened. The indomitable Mother Courage has no choice but harnesses herself to the wagon, and decides to get back into her business.

Grusha's fate is bound with Michael in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Grusha once left the child on the threshold of a peasant's cottage hoping the peasant woman could give some milk to the child. However, things do not go smoothly, because the peasant woman not only surrenders the child to the ironshirts but also leaks out Michael's background. Grusha has no choice but to knock out a corporal by hitting him over his head from behind with a log of wood.

In the twenty-two days flight, Grusha's time is occupied with comforting, feeding and changing diapers for this baby. Doubtlessly, her repeated performances of expected maternal behaviors are the practices for mothers (Longhurst 9). Her final adopting of this child is a transformation from feelings of pity for him to feelings of motherly love.

GRUSHA. Since no one else will take you, son,

I must take you.

Since no one else will take you, son,

You must take me. (*Chalk Circle* 148-9)

From this moment, Grusha takes the full responsibility of a mother. The best evidence for this is when she tries to cross a dilapidated bridge with Michael, because

she risks both their lives to escape from being caught by the ironshirts. The merchant woman advises her not to cross the almost rotten bridge with the baby:

THE MERCHANT WOMAN. Maybe she's *really* got to get across. Give *me* the baby. I'll hide it. Cross the bridge alone!

GRUSHA. I won't. We belong together. (*To the CHILD*) 'Live together, die together.' (*Chalk Circle* 150-1)

In spite of it being a dangerous act; however, the maternal spirit is shown explicitly.

When Grusha finally reaches her brother's home with weariness and relief, Grusha's sister-in-law is very sensitive about any one having children out of wedlock. In order to have a place to spend the winter, Grusha and her brother, Lavrenti, have no choice but tell her sister-in-law a lie which Grusha hopes to be true.

THE SISTER-IN-LAW. Is the child hers?

GRUSHA. Yes, mine.

LAVRENTI. She's on her way to her husband. (*Chalk Circle* 154)

This white lie temporarily prevents Grusha and her child from being chased out from the farm by her sister-in-law; and of course, she tries to make the child behave well and not to be noticeable in the house.

GRUSHA.

Michael, we must be clever. If we make ourselves as small as cockroaches, the sister-in-law will forget we're in the house, and then we can stay till the snow melts. (*Chalk Circle* 156)

However, her brother feels that it is an embarrassing situation for her to live with them the whole winter long:

LAVRENTI (*eagerly*). I'll tell you what we'll do. You need a place to go, and, because of the child (*he sighs*), you have to

have a husband, so people won't talk. (*Chalk Circle* 157)

Therefore, Lavrenti offers Grusha a dying neighbor to be her husband. It is not surprising that Grusha accepts this offer, because this is a solution to avoid gossip for her son and herself. Sometimes Grusha regrets having taken the child along, because she has lost her freedom to marry a man whom she really loves.

GRUSHA. . . . Michael, it would have been better had I walked
quickly away on that Easter Sunday in Nuka in the second
courtyard. Now I am a fool. (*Chalk Circle* 158)

For an unmarried girl, the struggle between her maternal responsibility and her freedom is natural.

Several years have passed, Grusha has begun to accept her identity as a mother when she meets her love, Simon, again. Simon at first thinks that her heart belongs to someone else.

SIMON. When the wind once starts to blow, they say, it blows
Through every cranny. The wife need say no more.
(*Chalk Circle* 169)

It is at this moment that Simon resentfully leaves, and Michael is also seized by two ironshirts.

ONE OF THE IRONSHIRTS. Are you Grusha? (*She nods.*) Is this
your child?

GRUSHA. Yes. (*SIMON goes.*) Simon! (*Chalk Circle* 170)

Obviously, Grusha chooses Michael and follows the kidnappers back to Nuka. Her choice proves her true maternal love toward Michael.

When the war is over, the governor's wife wants to take her son back. Michael the boy is the only heir to the late governor's estates. The governor's wife reclaims

for the custody of Michael is because “the revenue of her estates is blocked, and she is cold-bloodedly told that it’s tied to the heir. She can’t do a thing without that child.”

(*Chalk Circle* 200) At first Azdak, who used to be a swindler and accidentally become a judge, responds her demand obediently:

THE ADJUTANT. Natella Abashwili, wife of the late Governor,
has just returned. She is looking for her two-year-old son,
Michael.

AZDAK. The child will be brought back, Your Highness, at
your service. (*Chalk Circle* 193)

However, after the trial Azdak draws a circle on the ground and places Michael within it. He proclaims whoever can pull this boy outside of the circle, the custody of the child will belong to the winner. In the first round, Grusha is not hardhearted enough to pull that boy’s arm and lets his birth mother win. The judge asks these two Mothers to do it again; nevertheless, Grusha unclasps her hands again in order to avoid the boy being hurt.

GRUSHA (*in despair*). I brought him up! Shall I also tear him to
bits? I can’t! (*Chalk Circle* 206)

After these two rounds, according to the rule, the boy should belong to the governor’s wife for she has won the contest. However, the judge awards the boy to Grusha, because Azdak finds Grusha possesses a real maternal love. The judge determines that Grusha is the person who really cares about the child.

Grusha’s case manifests that maternity is not exclusive to a birth mother or a foster mother, but to a responsible mother who is willing to spend time to care and love her children. The good interaction between the mother and the child is the key to a true maternal love. It cannot be taken for granted that a woman who gives birth

to a child will be a 'good' mother who can love her child unconditionally and can meet their children's needs selflessly day after day. Maternity is shaped, and reshaped, over time and different spaces (Longhurst 148). Therefore, Grusha is qualified to be Michael's legitimate mother.

