



NT Education Workpack

The Coast of Utopia

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**THE STOPPARD TRILOGY**
Olivier Theatre Season

THE COAST OF UTOPIA

VOYAGE SHIPWRECK SALVAGE

WORLD PREMIERE OF THREE NEW PLAYS BY TOM STOPPARD



'STOPPARD'S EPIC SUCCESS... NOTHING OF SUCH AMBITION, DARING OR SCOPE HAS MARKED THE NATIONAL'S 38-YEAR HISTORY'
Evening Standard

'HEROICALLY AMBITIOUS... I WOULDN'T HAVE MISSED IT FOR WORLDS'
Guardian

'I FIND THIS TRILOGY BEAUTIFUL... IT RESTORES ONE'S FAITH IN THEATRE'
Financial Times

'AS FUNNY, AS MOVING, AS ANYTHING STOPPARD HAS WRITTEN... A COMIC TOUR DE FORCE'
Daily Telegraph

Company for the Trilogy: THOMAS ARNOLD, EYE BEST, JOHN CARLISLE, MARTIN CHAMBERLAIN, RAYMOND COULTHARD, SIMON DAV FELICITY DEAN, STEPHEN DILLANE, JANINE DUVVIER, CHARLOTTE EMERSON, RACHEL FERRARI, GUY HEWITT, DOUGLAS HENSHALL, RICHARD HOLLEN, JESSAMINE PRIDE, JACK JONES, WILL KEEN, JENNIFER SCOTT MCELLEN, SARAH MAYTON, ANNA MAXWELL MARTIN, IAIN MITCHELL, JOHN NOLAN, PAUL RITTER, NICK SAMPSON, JONATHAN SLINGER, JANEY SPENCER-TURNER, KEMAL SYLVESTER, SAM TROUGHTON, DAVID VERREY, LUCY WYBROW & Children from THE JACKIE PALMER SILENT SCHOOL.

Director: TREVOR NUNN Set, Costume & Video Designer: WILLIAM DUDLEY Lighting Designer: DAVID HERSEY Associate Director: STEPHEN RAYNE Music: STEVEN EDIS Movement Director: DAVID BOLGER Sound Designer: PAUL GROOTHUIS

Barclays is a premiere partner of the National Theatre

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South Bank, London SE1
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The Coast of Utopia
by Tom Stoppard

Further production details:
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The trilogy

The personal and the political

'If we can't arrange our own happiness, it's a conceit beyond vulgarity to arrange the happiness of those who come after us' (Herzen: Shipwreck, Act 2, p. 100)

In its exploration of the various ways in which 19th-century revolutionaries and thinkers tried and failed to establish political utopias, and with them organize the future of others, *The Coast of Utopia* charts the rise of a new and influential class in Russia – the intelligentsia. The political, moral and literary debates that preoccupied its members between 1833 and 1868, both within and outside their native country, provide the backdrop to a journey that begins on a provincial Russian estate in 1833. We follow the story of Stoppard's real-life protagonists – the socialist thinker and publisher Alexander Herzen, the anarchist Michael Bakunin, the literary critic Vissarion Belinsky, the writer Ivan Turgenev and the poet Nicholas Ogarev – as well as that of their sisters, wives, lovers and children, through travel, exile abroad, and, in some cases, untimely death. In 1848 some of them become caught up in the revolutions that ravage many European cities that year, prompting further dispersal of the group into various émigré enclaves, Herzen moving from Paris, to Nice, to London, and finally Geneva. As the play closes, his old friend Bakunin, returns from years of imprisonment and exile in Russia.

Underpinning the politics, the debates and the big ideas that are the driving force of *The Coast of*

Utopia is a moving human story: of personal suffering, of love and bereavement, of hopes abandoned and renewed, of friendships broken and finally reconciled. Above all, the trilogy is a testament to the true nature of love and friendship – between Herzen and Bakunin, Herzen and Ogarev, and Herzen and his wife Natalie – relationships tested to the limits by political differences as well as acts of personal betrayal. In weaving the domestic lives of his real-life heroes into the historical fabric of nineteenth-century history, Stoppard counterpoints the individual experience of personal tragedy with the sweep of historic events, providing a discourse not only on the so-called 'accursed questions' which dominated nineteenth-century Russian radical thought, but also an exploration of the human condition itself.

The 'bit players' in the human story

The rich and complex subject matter of *Coast of Utopia* is an extraordinary undertaking for any playwright working outside Russia. Whilst the name of Bakunin might be vaguely familiar here (if only for his association with other political misfits of the oft-demonized 'loony left'), Herzen – a major figure in the pantheon of Russian political thinkers – is surprisingly little known in Britain, even in intellectual circles. The literary critic, Vissarion Belinsky, who dominated Russian literary criticism during his short, frantic life, is unheard of.

A supporting cast of friends, hangers-on and political fellow travellers, all of them equally vivid and idiosyncratic historical figures, make up this collection of the largely forgotten heretics and dreamers of nineteenth-century history, many of whom were briefly, and sometimes ignominiously caught up in the fast-moving events of 1848. Stoppard admits to a particular affection for these marginalized figures. Not least among them, too, are the women in the story: the Bakunin sisters, the three Natalies: Herzen, Tuchkov and Beyer; the émigré German feminists Malwida von Meysenbug, Emma Herwegh and Johanna Kinkel, and the matriarchs Luisa Haag and Varvara Bakunin.

What is wrong with this picture? – 'The accursed questions'

The ambitious text of *The Coast of Utopia* throws up a wide range of thought-provoking arguments, broaching as it does a succession of fundamental

Will Keen and Douglas Henshall
photo Ivan Kyncl



The trilogy

debates of the time, which in Russia began with the discussion of German Romantic philosophy in the 1830s. Each play hangs on several key events or arguments, which provide both the student of the text and the interested theatregoer with a considerable resource for further research, reading and informed argument. These relate to Russia's position in relation to European civilization and history – reflected in the debate between the Slavophiles and Westerners in *Shipwreck* – to man's place in the universe, to the nature of personal liberty, and the justification – or not – for violent revolution in the quest to liberate oppressed nations from authoritarian rule. In *Voyage*, Herzen poses what will be one of the fundamental and recurring questions of the play: 'What is wrong with this picture?' What, he asks, is wrong with tsarist Russia, a country crippled by its outmoded, feudal systems, by its censorship and political despotism; and, more to the point, how can Russians of conscience put it right?

Whilst much of the story takes place in Europe, *The Coast of Utopia* is also the story of Russia itself during this period, if seen only through the refracted glass of exile. Herzen once observed that 'there are only two interesting problems: the social problem and the Russian problem' and that they were inextricably linked. And so, his eyes and those of his circle of Russian friends forever turned on their native land. Events in Russia, even when experienced at a distance, shaped their lives, their passions, their frenzied debates and disagreements, and for many years fuelled Herzen's passionate campaign to liberate the Russian serfs.

The ferment of ideas

Whilst some of Herzen's friends – George Herwegh and Bakunin included – became caught up in the popular movements of 1848, Herzen continued to pursue his own metaphorical visions through the written word. His friend, the cool and detached bystander, Turgenev, often joined him in observing some of these events – forever witty, ironic and perceptive, but never judgmental. In *The Coast of Utopia*, it is the steady flow of words and ideas that keep frustrated Russian intellectuals going through the repressive reign of Nicholas I (1825–55) and the disappointments that follow the 1861 emancipation of the serfs by his successor, Alexander II. Throughout the nineteenth century the tsarist

government might exert a stranglehold over civil and political liberties, but it could never control that most precious commodity – ideas, the free flow of which, channelled by Herzen in the pages of *The Bell*, would be the lifeblood of all disaffected Russians, everywhere.

Making drama out of history: the playwright's approach

Tom Stoppard has readily admitted that writing *The Coast of Utopia* was the most arduous thing he has ever done. As long ago as the mid-1960s he had first entertained the idea of writing a play about Russia, initially having the 'very abstract desire' to write something naturalistic in the manner of Chekhov. The idea gathered ground in the late 1990s, under the guiding intellectual force of the writings of Isaiah Berlin, in particular his seminal work, *Russian Thinkers*. Reading it prompted Stoppard to begin contemplating a single play about Alexander Herzen – of whose ideas Berlin was a lifelong and most passionate advocate. But as Stoppard began reading around the subject, so the project morphed into something far more ambitious: 'I began to think I'd need two plays. Then I thought, let's go for broke'. Seeing Trevor Nunn's production of Maxim Gorky's *Summerfolk* in 1999 was the final catalyst, with Stoppard now mooting the idea of a trilogy of plays – each of them focussing on one of three central subjects: Bakunin, Belinsky and Herzen.

With Nunn's endorsement of the project, Stoppard embarked on a prodigious reading programme that would exhaust even the most enthusiastic of researchers. Punctilious about facts and obsessive about detail, he read and re-read a wide range of sources, with 'almost a psychosis for unearthing every last scrap of information'. A naturally omnivorous reader, he was determined to winkle out those obscure but, to his mind, vital facts that might provide valuable insights. Like all perfectionists, Stoppard remains dissatisfied; during three months in rehearsal and a month of previews he continued to hone and refine the text, ironing out the structural and narrative problems. In so doing, he remained firmly resistant to 'taking bricks out of the wall' of what he felt were the play's intellectually demanding, but crucial, arguments. Director Trevor Nunn has championed the text's emotional and intellectual demands. Stoppard 'sets

The trilogy

the bar very high' in his opinion and doesn't set out to help the audience by making concessions or explanations. For the actors too, Nunn admits, the text is 'daunting stuff' – 'as complex a text as a Shakespeare'.

Creating a visual kaleidoscope: the designer's challenge

A list of 70 characters, based on real people, provides a rare opportunity for the 30-strong ensemble cast of *The Coast of Utopia*, many of them playing several different roles, to demonstrate their versatility, not to mention their speed at donning a veritable emporium of wigs, beards and 169 costumes. The combined talents of designer, William Dudley, and the NT Costume Department succeed in transforming many of the cast into uncanny lookalikes – from Belinsky in his cap and baggy trousers, to Turgenev effortlessly languid in his immaculately tailored suits, to the daft chocolate-soldier uniforms donned by George and Emma Herwegh as they march off to the insurrection in Baden.

From the outset, Stoppard endorsed Dudley's filmic approach to the set design for *The Coast of Utopia*, necessitated by the rapid and constantly changing locations, where the use of conventional stage sets would have been unviable. Having, for the last ten years or so, nursed an ambition to use the innovative techniques of computer graphics in stage design, Dudley did a crash course in them and convinced Stoppard and Nunn of their

effectiveness. Although simplified versions of these techniques have already been tried out in a few experimental theatres they have never been employed on anything like the ambitious scale of the Stoppard trilogy.

As someone with an appetite for new challenges, Dudley saw the Olivier's revolving stage as offering the perfect venue for a vivid fairground ride through his video landscapes. These are created by giant projectors, transmitting Dudley's designs onto seven moving, curved panels containing concealed doorways. They frequently evoke old Victorian magic lantern slides – most notably the skating scene in *Voyage* act 2; elsewhere, they are Dudley's personal salute to the innovative designs of post-revolutionary Russian theatre. Enlisting the help of Richard Kenyon for the more complex animations, he produced an average of 15 set designs for each play, enhanced by lighting designer David Hersey's simulation of real weather conditions.

Whirling, spinning and swooping, these computer-generated images draw the audience into a relentless visual extravaganza, that is sometimes vertiginous (the storm at Blackgang Chine), often surreal (the flying cages of Moscow's zoological gardens), and hauntingly naturalistic (the dappled sunlight on the birch trees at Premukhino). Dudley is convinced that the future of stage design lies in these new techniques. They will, he believes, play an important role in attracting a new and younger audience to the theatre, now so enamoured of virtual-reality computer games and reluctant, it seems, to sit through conventional stage productions.

Will Keen and Stephen Dillane
photo Ivan Kyncl



Voyage

Growing up in paradise: Premukhino

The spacious, neoclassical Bakunin manor house, Premukhino, was set in an idyllic glade of woodland at Premukhino, north-west of Moscow in the Torzhok district of the province of Tver. After settling there in 1797 with his wife Varvara, Alexander Bakunin added two brick-built wings to the main wooden structure, as well as a doric front portico. He remodelled the park, planting an avenue of lime trees, one for each of his children, as well as ponds, cascades and a grotto. The gardens surrounding the house led down a gentle slope to the nearby River Osuga, its banks a mass of bird cherry, wood roses and lilies of the valley, where nightingales could be heard day and night during the spring and peasant girls sang amid the raspberry canes in high summer. In this rural idyll the Bakunins reared their ten children: four daughters and six sons (the five younger ones do not feature in the play), abandoning their town house in Tver in 1812 to live at Premukhino all the year round.

In *Voyage* the family seem to enjoy one endless, halcyon summer day of long convivial lunches, and evenings spent watching the sun go down. As Alexander tells his daughters in the final scene: 'You grew up in Paradise, all of you children, in harmony that was the wonder of all who came here' (act 2, p. 113). Yet sadly, Premukhino did not come through the ravages of Russia's turbulent history unscathed. It shared the fate of many other country estates after the Revolution of 1917 and

Lucy Whybrow, Eve Best,
Charlotte Emmerson,
Anna Maxwell Martin

photo Ivan Kyncl



the ensuing Civil War. Some were demolished, others converted into schools or sanatoria. Premukhino was vandalized: its roof was taken off and its ironwork stripped away to be smelted for re-use. Much of the remaining wooden structure, left exposed to the open air, either fell down or was salvaged by local villagers; one of the brick-built wings also vanished. One by one the great oak and spruce trees planted in the park with such love by Alexander Bakunin were felled. The nearby whitewashed family church is still standing, although long since stripped of its interior decorations and its icons; the Bakunin family graves have been destroyed.

Four Sisters

In *Voyage*, a noisy and opinionated Mikhail Bakunin makes much of asserting his own personal autonomy, whilst simultaneously exerting an almost perverse controlling influence over the lives of his sisters: Liubov (1811–38), Varenka (1812–56), Tata (1815–71) and Alexandra (1816–82). They were, for their time, highly cultivated young women, receiving a liberal education that was exceptional, thanks to the civilized 18th-century ideals of their father Alexander. Taught by him, and by governesses, they spoke French and German, played piano and sang, and were well-versed in Western literature and philosophy.

Nevertheless, they lived the most sheltered of provincial lives, much like the Brontë sisters at Haworth. Their fertile imaginations were fuelled by romantic fantasies about love, gleaned from Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* and the novels of George Sand. They may well, in their eagerness, have rushed to read Sand's novels in French, before they were even translated. And there were plenty to choose from: a torrent of romantic stories poured from her prolific pen in the 1830s – *Indiana* (1832), *Valentine* (1832), *Lélia* (1833), *Jacques* (1834) to name the earliest. In Russia these novels were gobbled up by an adoring readership and directly inspired the first discussions of the 'woman question' there. It is not hard to see why impressionable young women such as the Bakunin sisters so idolized her, for Sand wrote, often with considerable compassion, on the trap of marriage, and on the sexual slavery and domestic tyranny too often perpetuated by loveless unions. The idealistic alternative that she promoted, of relationships between equals, based

Voyage

on the transforming power of love, no doubt prompted the Bakunin sisters in their own sadly abortive love affairs with Stankevich, Belinsky and Turgenev. In Russia, Sand's *Jacques* became a prototype for the love triangle espoused by many Russian progressives advocating free love; *Little Fadette* (1848) mirrors the Herzen-Natalie-Herwegh triangle in *Shipwreck*.

Written work and further study

How accessible are the German philosophical arguments promoted by Bakunin and Stankevich in Act 1 of *Voyage*? Do their ideas make sense and do they have any relevance in our modern world? If not, how does Stoppard parody them?

How exceptional does the Bakunin sisters' upbringing seem in comparison with the general position of women at the time? Did their enthusiasm for their brother's ideas and the writings of George Sand have a constructive or a destructive effect on their lives?

How does Stoppard's portrayal of the provincial lives of the Bakunin sisters compare with the frustrated hopes and dreams of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* – or the lives of the Brontë sisters?

Compare Stoppard's depiction of life on the country estate with that in Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard* and Turgenev's *A Month in the Country*. To what extent has he succeeded in distilling the Chekhovian/Turgenevian quality of rural Russia

and, for those who have seen the production, how well served is the play in this respect by William Dudley's design?

Discuss the following seminal quotations from the play:

Stankevich: 'The inner life is more real, more complete, than what we call reality.' (Act 1, p.19)

Turgenev: 'We're all Hegleians now, what's rational is real, what's real is rational.' (Act 1, p.52)

Herzen: 'People don't storm the Bastille because history proceeds by zigzags. History zigzags because when people have had enough, they storm the Bastille.' (Act 2, p.104)

Belinsky: 'If something true can be understood about art, something will be understood about liberty, too, and science, and politics and history.' (Act 1, p.39)

Chaadaev: 'How did we come to be the Caliban of Europe?' (Act 2, p. 82)

Eve Best and Raymond Coulthard
photo Ivan Kyncl



Shipwreck

The Two Natalies

Tom Stoppard's interest in exploring not just the politics but the 'messy personal lives' of his protagonists can be seen in his portrayal of the complex interrelationships of the Herzens, Ogarevs and Herweghs. Herzen's wife, his cousin Natalie Zakharina (1817–52), was, like him, illegitimate. After their elopement in 1838 and despite the never-ending demands of motherhood, Natalie clung steadfastly to her adolescent dreams of being fulfilled in her relationship with her husband. She felt compelled to live in a constantly heightened state of exalted feeling, responsive always to the 'divine spirit of love ... for all creation' (Act 2, p. 85). But at the opening of *Shipwreck*, she is already regretfully admitting to Ogarev: 'Now grownupness has caught up with us ... as if life were too serious for love' (Act 1, p. 6). After Natalie and Herzen left Russia in January 1847, she increasingly missed the circle of friends whose company she had so enjoyed during the summers at Sokolovo, particularly after Herzen became more and more absorbed in political life. She found emotional fulfilment for a while in her romantic friendship with Natalie (Natasha) Tuchkov, whom she met in Rome in 1848, and who travelled back to Paris with the Herzens. The attachment of the two Natalies was lived out like one of George Sand's novels, with Natalie Herzen calling Natalie Tuchkov her 'Consuelo' – after the eponymous heroine of a novel by Sand. Their relationship prompted a stream of passionate love letters between them,

Eve Best and Stephen Dillane
photo Ivan Kyncl



(see Carr 1998 in bibliography), many of which have been preserved.

1848: the year of demagogues, revolutionaries and tin soldiers

The turbulent year 1848 brought the metaphorical shipwreck of many of the ideals and aspirations nursed for so long by Herzen and his contemporaries. Demonstrations calling for electoral reform and universal male suffrage began in Sicily in January. Newly arrived in Paris, Herzen and his family watched in horror as events unfolded there in February, beginning with street fighting after the abdication of King Louis Philippe. Unrest spread to virtually every continental country except, ironically, that most reactionary of all – Russia. Other seats of protest were Vienna (then capital of Prussia), Berlin (then capital of Prussia), and Prague (then part of the Austro-Hungarian empire). In Italy Milan, Bologna, Naples and Rome rose up against Austrian domination; the Bourbon king of Sicily quickly capitulated and granted a constitution, as did the governments of Tuscany, Naples, Piedmont and the Papal States.

The Prussian and Austrian governments offered the palliative of a role for liberal politicians in existing government and by the autumn had regained control of Prague and Berlin. Meanwhile, Herwegh had gone marching off to war in Baden, at the head of a force of French and German workers, only to suffer ignominious defeat. He fled to Zurich, and then made his way back to Paris until allowed to return to Germany in an amnesty in 1866. In Paris, meanwhile, a small group of republicans, led by Alexandre Ledru-Rollin, seized power and elected a Constituent Assembly. But they soon found themselves opposed by a group of more extreme, working-class radicals led by Louis Blanc, leading to more fighting on the streets of Paris for three days in June.

In December the Constituent Assembly elected Louis Napoleon (nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte) president of a new republic; but democratic government did not last long – three years later, after staging a coup d'état, he proclaimed himself Emperor Napoleon III. The revolt in Hungary, led by Kossuth was one of the last to be quelled, in 1849, after Nicholas I of Russia sent in troops. Bakunin, having taken part in the February fighting in Paris, went off to join the uprisings in Prussia and Poland,

Shipwreck

but after the insurrection in Dresden in May 1849 he was arrested, jailed in Saxony and from there extradited to Russia in 1851.

Discussion and further study

How does Stoppard depict the women in radical circles? Were they really emancipated – or merely the camp followers of their husband's political dreams? Does Stoppard see their influence as being positive or negative and how much does domesticity get in the way of the pursuit of ideas?

Belinsky lauded the decision of writers to remain in their own countries, however repressed, so that they might stay close to the source of their inspiration. This tradition persisted with writers such as Pasternak (who refused to leave Russia) and Solzhenitsyn (whose work suffered when he did). How does Turgenev's position, as depicted by Stoppard, compare?

Stoppard has argued that censorship had one great, positive effect on Russian literature: it 'made people look to writers as their real leaders'. To what extent is this valid today – not just in Russia? Did exile diminish Herzen's influence and his subsequent importance in Russia?

Compare the depiction of the events in Paris in 1848 with Victor Hugo's classic novel about the revolution, *Les Misérables*, and with the stage musical and other film versions (see related materials).

Raymond Coulthard and
Eve Best
photo Ivan Kyncl



As a counterpoint to events in the political arena during *Shipwreck*, Stoppard charts the short, but happy life of Herzen's profoundly deaf son, Kolya. Compare his depiction of the world of the deaf child with that in other plays that tackle the subject such as *The Miracle Worker* and *Children of a Lesser God*.

Discuss the following seminal quotations from the play:

Aksakov: 'Go to France for your cravats if you must, but do you have to go to France for your ideas?' (Act 1, p.18)

Proudhon: 'Why should anyone obey anyone else?' (Act 1, p.18)

Théophile Gautier (on art for art's sake): 'a novel is not a pair of boots... A sonnet is not a syringe.' (Act 1, p.24)

Bakunin: 'Freedom is a state of mind.'

Herzen: 'No, it's a state of not being locked up.' (Act 1, p.36)

Herzen: 'Who is this Moloch who eats his children?' (Act 1, p.56)

Herzen: 'A child's purpose is to be a child.' (Act 2, p.100)

Herzen: 'If we can't arrange our own happiness, it's a conceit beyond vulgarity to arrange the happiness of those who come after us.' (Act 2, p.100)

Bakunin's anarchist credo: 'Destruction is a creative passion' (Act 2, p.103)

Salvage

A Forgotten feminist: Malwida von Meysenbug

On the surface, she might have seemed that Victorian archetype, the self-effacing governess, but Malwida von Meysenbug was a woman of considerable independent spirit, who supported the democratic ideals of 1848, seeing in them an opportunity to advance the emancipation of women. She knew and corresponded with many of the male 'Forty-Eighters' and in Frankfurt had joined the Free Catholic Congregation, a religious opposition group that advocated equality of the sexes. Rejecting the offer of marriage to a German exile, Julius Froebel, and a new life in the USA, she went to Hamburg to study, and later teach, at a pioneering women's higher education institute run by Catholic liberals. But by 1852 she was under surveillance by the Prussian police for associating with revolutionaries, and fled to London to avoid arrest.

As a single woman, and a refugee, few options for earning a living presented themselves to Malwida when she arrived in London in May, apart from giving German lessons. Mixing with German exiles, she was befriended by Gottfried and Johanna Kinkel, who introduced her to Herzen. During her three years as teacher (she flatly rejected the title of governess) to Herzen's children Malwida became well acquainted with the major revolutionary figures of the day, such as Louis Blanc, Giuseppe Mazzini, and Lajos Kossuth. She also took an interest in the embryonic women's movement in England, supporting campaigns for women's higher

education – particularly the opening of the medical schools to them – and the right of married women to control their own property. Eventually, conflict with Herzen's mistress, Natalie Ogarev, over the children forced Malwida to leave in 1856. She spent time helping Mazzini establish a workers' circle for Italian *émigrés* in London, supporting herself by translating and writing articles for radical publications such as *The Bell*. After Herzen's death she legally adopted his youngest daughter Olga and settled in Rome where she held her own salon. She became a friend and confidant of Nietzsche and Richard Wagner and was a mentor of the poet Romain Rolland. In 1876 she published her autobiography in German (partially translated as *Rebel in Crinoline*). When she died of cancer in 1903, Malwida was buried in the Testaccio cemetery in Rome, not far from the graves of Keats and Goethe.

Malwida's friend Johanna Kinkel (1810–58) was an equally outspoken and accomplished woman. A pianist and composer, she had moved in progressive circles in Berlin and Bonn, and in London was a central figure in the *émigré* community. In 1860 she published a fictionalized autobiography, *Hans Ibeles in London: A Family Picture of Refugee Life*, about her years in exile, in which Malwida is thinly disguised as the governess, Meta Braun. Emma Herwegh (1817–1904) also fancied herself as a writer, recording her experiences of 1848, in typically self-dramatizing style, as *On the History of the German Democratic Legion from Paris, By a Woman Accused of High Treason*.

Stephen Dillane and
Lucy Whybrow
photo Ivan Kyncl



Journey's end: Herzen's credo

Herzen's final speech (*Salvage* act 2, p. 118) is a crystallization of many of the strands of argument that make up *The Coast of Utopia*'s intellectual fabric. It contains his final rebuttal of Marx's arguments on the inevitability of history, with Herzen insisting that the happiness of society in the future can never be justified by acts of violence and bloodshed committed in the present. With great passion, Herzen argued throughout his life that a just society could only be based on mutual tolerance and respect for the rights of the individual over the collective. These seminal ideas, which come in the main from Herzen's key essays in *From the Other Shore*, were discussed by Isaiah Berlin in *Russian Thinkers* (1978), and have now been

Salvage

crystallized by Stoppard in his own unique style. With the English text of *From the Other Shore* sadly long out of print, a study of Berlin's essays 'Herzen and Bakunin on Liberty' and 'Alexander Herzen' will provide many instances of how Stoppard has deftly refined and recoinced these arguments in dramatic form.

Discussion and further study

Salvage illustrates the powerful role played in repressed societies by the underground press – a tradition begun by Herzen and continued throughout the Soviet era, notably by Solzhenitsyn. Discuss its importance in effecting political and social change in authoritarian societies.

The governess has often featured in literature. The problems they encountered in being assimilated into a new environment – or even culture – has been dramatized in novels such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and even the musical *The King and I* (1956). The theme of the bond between governess and her charges is also explored in Henry James's novella *The Turn of the Screw*. Compare and contrast the experience of Malwida with other fictional governesses in literature, theatre and film. Does she suffer from the same problems of integration, isolation and a sense of loss/rejection when she has to leave?

Stoppard has described his use of children in the plays as a device to 'up the emotional ante'. The children undoubtedly play a crucial role in

Shipwreck and *Salvage*; discuss how Stoppard juxtaposes the broad panorama of political life with the personal and often poignant world of domestic life and the family. How successful is it in dramatic terms?

Stephen Dillane
photo Ivan Kyncl



Epilogue

What happened next?

The Bakunin Sisters

The lives of the four sisters all ended more or less unhappily: Lyubov died of tuberculosis in 1838 after her doomed love affair with Stankevich; Varenka, incited by Bakunin into leaving her dull husband, Nikolay Dyakov, had a brief affair with Stankevich in Italy, before he too died of tuberculosis. She returned to Dyakov in 1843 and had a child by him, dying in 1866. After a brief romance with Turgenev, Tata had hopes of going to Berlin but soon resigned herself to the life of a provincial spinster, devoting her time to assembling the family archive. She had ambitions to write a family history but never got beyond a few pages; she died in 1871. Alexandra, after her romance with Botkin, married a cavalry officer and had several children, but her husband died young; she lived until 1882. All of the sisters were considerably outlived by two of their five younger brothers, who survived into the 1900s.

The Herzen children

Natalie Herzen gave birth to nine children during her marriage to Alexander Herzen, five of whom died at birth or soon after. She lost the will to live after the drowning of Kolya and died of pleurisy a few months later, shortly after giving birth to her last child, who was buried with her. Of the other children, Sasha, the eldest son married an Italian, Teresina Felici, by whom he had ten children. He studied medicine and became a professor of physiology, dying in Lausanne in 1906. Tata and Olga Herzen lived to old age: Tata died unmarried

in 1936; Olga, who married the French historian Gabriel Monod, had four children, and lived until 1953. Herzen's other surviving daughter – Liza – by Natalie Ogarev, was a restless, sensitive soul. Her short life ended in suicide in 1875 after an unhappy love affair with a married man.

The Intellectuals

After the closure of *The Bell* in 1868, Herzen's star faded, while Bakunin garnered a following among a new generation of Russian radicals no longer content to fight simply for democratic reform. A cell of dedicated revolutionaries – The People's Will – plotted the eventual assassination of the 'tsar-liberator' Alexander II in 1881. His death augured a new age of repression, censorship and reaction under Alexander III – and with it the hardening of Russian revolutionary objectives – the kind which would have been anathema to the liberal and humane Herzen. He died, prematurely aged, in Paris on 9 January 1870 – the same year that Lenin was born in Siberia – and was buried with Natalie in Nice.

Bakunin settled in Geneva in 1868 and joined Marx's First International. But he was expelled for his extremism in 1872, by which date, with the ideology of Marxism now on the ascendant, he too had outlived his political time. He died, disappointed but not defeated, in Berne on 1 July 1876. Ogarev, the generous and warm-hearted epileptic, died in penury, a hopeless alcoholic, in 1877. He was buried at Shooter's Hill Cemetery, Greenwich, mourned by the devoted Mary Sutherland but forgotten – both as a poet and as a radical – in his homeland. The steadfastly objective outsider, Turgenev, remained an unrepentant socialite to the end. He became one of Russia's most popular and respected writers in Europe and the USA. Despite choosing to spend the remainder of his life on the Continent, distanced from his source of inspiration, his heart remained in his homeland, his novels infused as they are with an elegiac nostalgia for Russia. When he died in France in 1883 his body was taken back to St Petersburg's Volkov cemetery, to be buried near the tomb of his friend Belinsky.

Lucy Whybrow and Eve Best
photo Ivan Kyncl



Epilogue

The continuing quest for utopias

*Not in Utopia, – subterranean fields, –
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!
But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us, – the place where in the end
We find our happiness, or not at all.*
Wordsworth, *The Prelude* bk 11, l. 140

The words of Wordsworth, written in 1850 are not only contemporaneous with Herzen's writing but uncannily echo his sentiments.

Like Herzen, Tom Stoppard believes that political and social utopias are an impossible ideal – not just, he explains, because of the 'fundamental, flawed nature' of human kind, but because people are, in general, simply 'too stubborn, selfish, foolish or blind' to go in search of them. Utopias, are, he argues, 'basically incoherent as a conception'. If they exist at all, then they are to be found, as Herzen discovered, inside all of us, in the experience of the moment – what he called the 'summer lightning of personal happiness' (*Salvage*, Act 2, p. 118). Yet the doomed pursuit of them has exerted an age-old fascination on men of ideas – from Plato, in his 4th century-BC work, the *Republic*; through Thomas More's *Utopia* of 1516, to George Orwell's satire of communist utopias in *Animal Farm* (1945).

Several practical attempts to set up communes based on utopian ideals were made in the nineteenth century by the followers of Robert Owen and Claude Henri de St Simon; messianic movements such as the Shakers in the USA also

shared similar ideals. With the coming of two devastating world wars in the twentieth century, the quest for utopias seemed finally buried, only to revive with 'flower power' and the New Left ideals that sparked the civil rights and anti-Vietnam movements of the 1960s in the USA, as well as another year of revolutions in Europe – this time in 1968.

The voyage continues: having taken a new direction with the latter-day environmentalist movement, it lives on in the 'new age' quest for alternative lifestyles, in a planet that is rapidly becoming overcrowded, polluted and increasingly fraught by racial and religious tensions. The message of Alexander Herzen and his often embattled contemporaries seems ever more pertinent; in his challenging trilogy Tom Stoppard offers profound and thought-provoking arguments that are as relevant now, in the new millennium, as they were more than a century and a half ago.

Guy Henry and
Stephen Dillane
photo Ivan Kyncl



For discussion

Tom Stoppard endorses Isaiah Berlin's view that, in a truly democratic society, no individual should be expected to obey anyone else without a good reason. He defines the essence of liberty as being 'not that my interests should be tolerated but that I should tolerate yours'. How closely does this coincide with the views of Herzen in *Coast of Utopia*?

How effective is *The Coast of Utopia* in conveying the complex lives and ideas of real people caught up in major historical events? How does it compare with Stoppard's depiction of literary and political figures in *Travesties* and *The Invention of Love*?

Does *The Coast of Utopia* have a valid part to play, as drama, in teaching us the cultural, literary and political history of Russia? How far are the characterizations affected – both in the negative and positive sense – by Stoppard's own political bias?

The Coast of Utopia's long gestation period is indicative of a work that has 'perhaps been a lifetime in the thinking', in the view of one critic, and which finally reveals Stoppard's 'Slavic heart', in the view of others. How far can it be taken as a declaration of his personal beliefs?

The all-day theatrical event dates back to the ancient Greek tragedies that were originally staged as mammoth trilogies. Discuss the tradition of such events in British theatre, from productions such as

the Royal Shakespeare Company's *The Wars of the Roses* in the 1960s, to Ken Campbell's seven-hour adaption of *Illuminatus!* at the NT in 1976, Trevor Nunn's RSC production of David Edgar's dramatization of *Nicholas Nickleby* in 1980, to Robert Lepage's 1996 visit to the NT with *Seven Streams of the River Ota*, and Peter Hall's 2001 RSC production of *Tantalus*.

Stoppard believes that the three plays, although sequential, are self-contained and could be seen (or read), out of chronological order. Do you agree with him, in the case of *Coast of Utopia*, that 'to learn things retroactively is sometimes more interesting'? What are the benefits of seeing all three plays in sequence and on the same day?

Iain Mitchell and
Will Keen
photo Ivan Kyncl



Related material

History/Ideas:

Isaiah Berlin 1994. *Russian Thinkers*. Penguin

Isaiah Berlin. 1996. *The Sense of Reality*. London: Chatto [see: 'Artistic Commitment: A Russian Legacy', on Belinsky]

Isaiah Berlin. 1997. *The Proper Study of Mankind*. Chatto & Windus. [see: 'Herzen and His Memoirs' – first pub. as introduction to *My Past and Thoughts* below]

Isaiah Berlin. 2000. *The Power of Ideas* [see: 'The Man Who Became a Myth' on Belinsky; 'A Revolutionary without Fanaticism' on Herzen]

Michael Billington. 1960. *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretative History of Russian Culture*. Vintage Books [see part IV, ch. 3 'The "Cursed Questions"' – on the debate between the Slavophiles and Westerners]

E. J. Brown. 1966. *Stankevich and His Moscow Circle* [a slim but valuable monograph on this little-known radical]

E. H. Carr. 1975. *Bakunin*. Macmillan [1st pub. 1937]

E. H. Carr. 1998. *The Romantic Exiles*. Serif. [first pub. 1933 and, in the continuing absence of full-length biographies of Herzen and Ogarev, still the standard].

Richard Hare. 1977. *Pioneers of Russian Social Thought*. Vintage. [on the Slavophiles and Westerners, Herzen, Chernyshevsky and Belinsky]

Alexander Herzen. 1956. *From the Other Shore and The Russian People and Socialism*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson [the two seminal Herzen essays]

Alexander Herzen. 1999. *My Past and Thoughts*. University of California Press. [abridged from Constance Garnett's translation by Dwight MacDonald; introduction by Isaiah Berlin]

Aileen Kelly. 1987. *Mikhail Bakunin: A Study in the Psychology and Politics of Utopianism*. Yale University Press.

Aileen Kelly. 1998. *Toward Another Shore: Russian Thinkers Between Necessity and Chance*. Yale University Press.

Aileen Kelly. 1999. *Views from the Other Shore: Essays on Herzen, Chekhov and Bakhtin*. Yale University Press.

Martin Malia. 1961. *Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism*. Harvard University Press

Malwida von Meysenbug. 1937. *Rebel in a Crinoline – memoirs of Malwida von Meysenbug*. George Allen & Unwin [published in USA 1936 as *Rebel in Bombazine*]

Monica Partridge. 1993. *Alexander Herzen: Collected Studies*. Astra Press. [for articles on Herzen in London and the Free Russian Press]

Leonard Schapiro. 1979. *Turgenev: His Life and Times*. Random House.

Judith E. Zimmerman 1989. *MidPassage: Alexander Herzen and European Revolution, 1847–1852*. University of Pittsburgh Press.

Stephen Dillane and
Douglas Henshall
photo Ivan Kyncl



Related material

Fiction:

A range of George Sand's novels are available in hard and paperback (see Amazon), particularly *Jacques* and *Indiana* (OUP World's Classics).

The following works by Ivan Turgenev are recommended in connection with the trilogy, available in OUP World's Classics, Penguin, Everyman and Wordsworth editions: *Fathers and Sons* [intro. to Penguin ed. by Isaiah Berlin], *Rudin*, *A Month in the Country*, *A Nest of Gentlefolk*, *First Love* (Penguin ed. trans. by Isaiah Berlin).

Alexander Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* is also widely available in paperback.

For the lives of the Brontë sisters, see: Juliet Barker. 1994. *The Brontës*. Weidengeld & Nicolson.

Stage and Film on Video

The following film versions are available on VHS (see Amazon):

Children of a Lesser God (1986) based on Mark Medoff's stage play.

Jane Eyre: Zeffirelli's 1996 version, Robert Young's 1997 ITV version; the 1983 BBC TV version and Orson Welles's classic 1943 version

Les Misérables (re 1848): a 1995 French subtitled version, and the most recent, Hollywood version (1999) starring Liam Neeson, although the

consensus is that Darryl F. Zanuck's 1935 version (available on VHS) starring Frederic March is the best. Trevor Nunn's stage version of the musical is also available on VHS.

The King and I: Margaret Landon's 1944 book *Anna and the King of Siam* was first filmed in 1946. The Rodgers and Hammerstein musical (1956) is available on video, as is the recent Hollywood remake *Anna and the King* (1999), starring Jodie Foster.

The Miracle Worker dir. Arther Penn (1962) based on William Gibson's 1959 play about the deaf and blind Helen Keller.

Three Sisters dir. Laurence Olivier (1970) based on his stage production for the NT at the Old Vic.

Famous Authors: The Brontë Sisters is available on video (see Amazon)

Douglas Henshall
photo Ivan Kyncl

