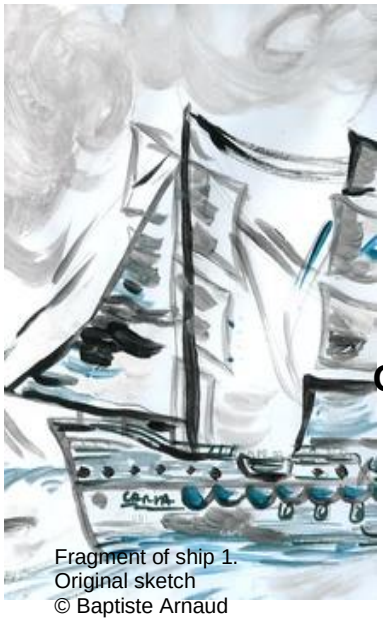

Fragment of ship 1.
Original sketch
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Introduction

Of Seas and Oceans, of Storms and Wreckage, of Water Battles and Love in Shakespeare's Plays

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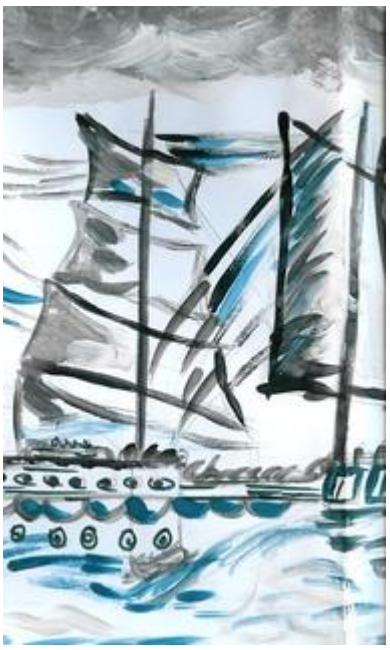
Keywords: Shakespeare, performance, water, sea and oceans, wreckage, poetry, illusion, scenography

Mots-clés : Shakespeare, mise en scène, eau, mer et océan, naufrage, poésie, illusion, scénographie

Viola
What country, friends, is this?
Captain
This is Illyria, lady.
Viola
And what should I do in Illyria?
My brother he is in Elysium.
Perchance he is not drown'd: what think you, sailors?
Captain
[…]To a strong mast that lived upon the sea;
Where, like Arion on the dolphin's back,
I saw him hold acquaintance with the waves
So long as I could see. (*Twelfth Night*, I.2.2-4/13-16)



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This collection of essays results from a seminar that was held in Rome on July 9-12, 2019. It was organized by ESRA – the European Shakespeare Research Association – and convened by Dana Monah from the University of Iasi (Romania) and myself. As the theme of the whole congress was entitled "Shakespeare and European Geographies: Centralities and Elsewhere," this seminar, mostly dedicated

to Shakespeare's plays that involve maritime events (such as tempests, wreckage or voyages), and to their scenographies, welcomed specialists in performance-studies, gender and blue-studies as well as linguists and archivists. A selection of papers has been included in this volume, in particular those that focused on idiosyncratic productions of Shakespeare's "liquid" narratives.

The various contexts in which Shakespeare's plays are set cross borders. Some places are easily spotted on maps, some others are imaginary and insubstantial. As we read the plays, our minds travel; as we attend the performances, our eyes explore materialized areas thanks to either elaborate or suggestive décors. Shakespearean characters are often attracted by the outside, either to conquer new territories or to flee from their own. Whether in tragedies, histories, romances or comedies, these unknown places contribute to shape new horizons, beyond the stage scope and the sixteenth-century audiences' imaginary borders.

How did Shakespeare describe the places that neither he nor his audience knew? How did different practitioners position themselves with respect to the "showing" *versus* "telling" dichotomy or to the relationship between the verbal and the non-verbal component of theatre performance? These essays tackle the sea routes and turbulent voyages from a textual and metaphorical approach as well as from the performative angle.

Fiammetta Dionisio's "Shakespeare's Imperfect 'Art of Navigation'. Controlling the Forces of the Sea in *The Tempest*" opens the volume. Her analysis explores three geographical and temporal periods: John Dee's philosophical observations on sea navigations – *The General and Rare Memorials Pertaining to the Perfect Art of Navigation* dating from 1577 – and their benefits (including those involving imperialistic goals). Then Shakespeare's *Tempest* (1611), and more particularly Prospero's own art of navigation, that both mirrors and contradicts Dee's views. And finally the production of *Nella Tempesta* by Motus Theatre Company presented at the TransAmérique Festival in Montreal (2013). Her essay convincingly displays the theories of the 1570s that might have served as a backdrop to Shakespeare's *Tempest* and to the exploration of America by Early modern ships. It also provides a thorough insight into the role and identity of Prospero in the play, and in the meaning of the various storms that humanity may go through, including that of the Self in

opposition to the Other (i.e. Caliban – the colonized). The work of Motus uses abstract notions (Prospero stands out of Dee's so-called "perfect" sea route) to be experimented physically on stage. The result sounds rather fascinating and proves how the stage informs Shakespeare's play in its historical context, and *vice versa*.

The next chapter, written by **Patrick Leboeuf** and entitled "A Shipwreck with no Ship and no Sea: Craig's Ideas on *Tempest* I.1," also explores the possibilities that Shakespeare's *Tempest* provides the stage with. In this essay, the author minutely accounts for the scenographies that Edward Gordon Craig drew and imagined between 1905 and 1956. As he explains, Craig never actually produced the play but shared his views with John Gielgud and Peter Brook who staged it with the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1957. Craig's final and ideal project was a tempest with no sea and no ship: the storm occurred in Prospero's mind who was seen rocking on a chair on stage. Craig's views were rather idiosyncratic in the first half of the 20th century, but they no longer sound fanciful today. The essay thus highlights the way in which the artist, born in 1872, had very clairvoyant opinions on the way in which Shakespeare's tricky devices – such as creating a storm – could be practically and efficiently performed.

In "Toward a Blue Gender Studies: The Sea, Diana, and Feminine Virtue in *Pericles*," **Alexander Lowe McAdams** looks at the Shakespearean play – *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* – from the angle of gender and blue cultural studies as well as eco-critical studies. The figure of Diana is central in this study as the Goddess controls the tides and is summoned by the various characters of the play to confront the dangers of the sea. She protects Marina's virginity when in the brothel, and helps present the shipwreck as a rather positive event. Indeed there, the eponymous protagonist meets Thaisa, his future wife, once she has been "driven upon shore" (see II.3.79-82). As a female, Diana (Poseidon being the Greek male counterpart and Neptune, the Latin one) embodies benevolence that eventually overpowers masculine destructive force. The author writes: "The goddess functions as a 'dynamic agent' in the course of the sea's vicissitudes and provides a prevailing logic over a watery world otherwise bereft of meaningful pattern." The essay sheds a worthy light on the gender implications of *Pericles* and shows how both ambiguous and paramount the sea is in this romance.

Another maritime play, *The Comedy of Errors,* is the main focus of **Efterpi Mitsi**'s article – "The Travails of *The Comedy of Errors* in Athens". Just like *The Tempest,* the play begins with the description of a shipwreck. The setting – the port city of Ephesus (which differs from the Adriatic in the main source, i.e. Plautus's *Menaechmi*) – underlies the Athenian production directed by Katerina Evangelatos (2018-19) that the author precisely analyses. A variety of styles and influences have fed this production: the circus, the ballet, slapstick comedy, silent movies and masks. Such variety has also served to address the themes of optical illusion, loss of identity, and double images. To draw a parallel with Alexander Lowe McAdams' approach, "because the sea has separated the twins [the two Antipholuses and the two Dromios] from the beginning of the play, [It] is not merely portrayed as a destructive force but also implies that the very notion of individuality is fluid and elusive," the author writes at the beginning. Efterpi Mitsi's essay finally questions the frenetic rhythm of Evangelatos' production and the excessive mixture of comic genres that shape new horizons for the Greek audience, exposing the composite material and lineage of the text.

With **Dana Monah**'s contribution – "Metatheatrical Storms in Georges Lavaudant's *Une Tempête…* (2010) and Oskaras Koršunovas' *Miranda* (2011)" – we further explore *The Tempest.* The author compares a French and a Lithuanian production and explains that the very different sets (a bare stage *versus* an indoor bookish décor) and cast (ambitious on the one hand and minimalist on the other) however seemed to proceed alike. They both emphasized the metatheatricality of Shakespeare's play and showed how the magic is quintessential in the poet's art. The two key stage directors compared by the author proved that modern stagecraft is not synonymous with complexity. Despite their singular choices, they created the illusion of the tempest with simple means and, as Dana Monah stresses, presented the performative event as though it was "negotiated in the very present of the stage, under the spectator's eyes, as part of a ritual (Korsunovas) or as [a kind of] theatrical improvisation (Lavaudant)".

These two examples can be linked to another very daring production of the same play that further questions the limits of theatrical experience. In "Mors bona, or, Storm in a tea cup? Shakespeare's *Tempest* in a puppet and live-actor production," **Gabriella Reuss** minutely analyses Hungarian director Rémusz Szikszai's puppet

mise en scène. After explaining how puppetry has been part of the country's artistic tradition for ages, the author sheds a new light on how the latter enables the actors and the viewers to reach the confines of the Shakespearean source. The imagery can be expressively conveyed by the fake bodies of the marionettes who figuratively mirror the inner moods that the actors enliven. Interestingly, the author wonders why Szikszai, who "meant to target an adult audience with the subject of leaving the worldly stage, chose the puppet medium to convey his message in a culture where puppetry in people's minds still equals the somewhat low and silly entertainment for little children." Here however, the mixture of puppets and live-actors in a rather sophisticated set managed to raise matters of alterity (the encounter between several nations) and offered clever solutions (such as ventriloquism, multiple focuses, etc.) to the various "problems" linked to bringing water on stage, thus creating a believable storm, even though in a "teacup".

Curiously, the set elaborated by Szikszai was reminiscent of Doran's 2016 production with the RSC, i.e. the ribs of the giant wreck of an admiral vessel. This other grandiose production of *The Tempest* is part of the study written by **Estelle Rivier-Arnaud** in "Doran's and Taymor's *Tempest*: Digitalizing the Storm, a Dialogue between Theatre and Cinema". Even if she mainly concentrates on the way the storm in I.1 was designed in both productions, one on stage and the other on screen, the author also questions the symbiotic means theatre and cinema use to converse, influence each other and eventually fuse. Doran worked with Intel Pentium to create a digital production, resorting to an orgy of stage effects (among which CGI). The result was technically astounding as well as beautiful. Julie Taymor also used elaborate techniques and camerawork (between handheld and steady camera) to create beautiful tableaux. Still, both productions do question the limits of art or the limit *between* arts. For indeed, what is expected in a theatrical performance in comparison with a cinematographic adaptation? Shakespeare is popular in both, but to what extent can new technologies convey the poetry of the script when the latter is so overwhelmed with the aesthetical attractiveness of images?

Finally, **Isabelle Schwartz-Gastine,** in her "Pascal Rambert's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1995): deep in love and in water," guides us towards other shores, back in French theatrical tradition when in the late 20th century, the excessive use of water to stage some famous episodes of *Antony and Cleopatra* was unconvincingly viewed by

the audience, the actors and the reviewers alike. The author remembers her own experience as a spectator and underlines the difficulty she had to retrace the various steps of the production, the archives of which having ironically drowned in a flood since! As a matter of fact, rather minimalistic effects were used in this otherwise demanding play until the second half of the production when the stage became a pool of water. Alas, it was neither innovative (Pina Bausch and Patrice Chéreau had already done it) nor beauteous (the actors, soaked to the bone, looked rather ridiculous in the end). This lively analysis draws the volume to its close in a rather entertaining way, even if it also triggers and answers puzzling interrogations such as the showing *vs* telling dichotomy that is at stake whenever Shakespeare's plays are staged.

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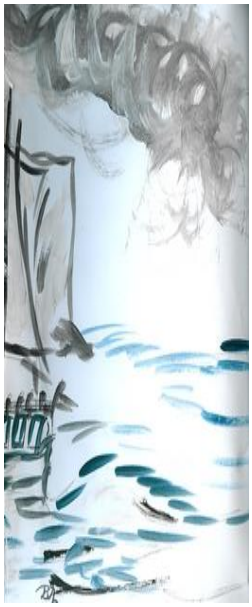
In this volume, as the reader will discover, the papers thus focus on the impact of seas and oceans in Shakespeare's plays, and raise a variety of issues linked to these natural elements: how for instance are water battles (against the enemy or against nature) dealt with, on page and on stage? How do female compared to male characters (whether they are drawn from the mythology or not) react when they are the victims of a shipwreck and, as a consequence, when they are lost and exiled? How are the sea routes key elements in the praxis? How were they possibly performed in Shakespeare's time and after? How do they inform us about the European geography Shakespeare and his contemporaries had in mind? How can new technologies in stage scenery today produce images that convey the illusion that the performance transcends the borders of representation? And finally how do all these stage devices address cultural and political issues of the performance?

To answer these questions, as the volume exemplifies, a play is undoubtedly central: *The Tempest* even though, as some of the chapters prove, it is far from being the only play to speak of storms, wreckage, loss, gender, identity and love. But Prospero's magic spells (see below) are so breath-taking and challenging for who listens to them carefully that any stage-director who would not attempt to actually *show* them might sound unimaginative, at least unambitious.

Prospero

Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves,
And ye that on the sands with printless foot

Do chase the ebbing Neptune and do fly him
When he comes back; you demi-puppets that
By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites, and you whose pastime
Is to make midnight mushrooms, that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew; **by whose aid,**
Weak masters though ye be, I have bedimm'd
The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
Set roaring war: to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt; the strong-based promontory
Have I made shake and by the spurs pluck'd up
The pine and cedar: graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth
By my so potent art.
(*The Tempest.* V.1.33-50. My emphasis)



Fragment of ship 3. Original sketch
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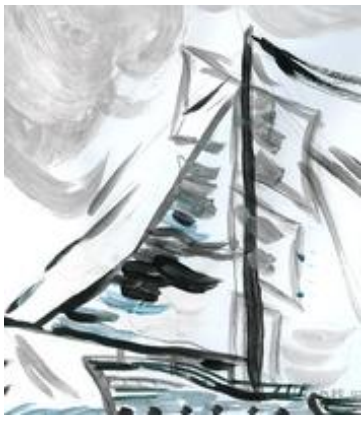
Acknowledgments

I owe many thanks to all the contributors of this volume. Their constant support to both the seminar in Rome and the publication of their research paper in the present journal has been very encouraging and inspiring. I am also very appreciative of all those who presented at the seminar, including those whose papers are not included in the current volume. They all played a crucial part in the Congress.

It must be added that this international volume fuelled by the experience and analysis of such a variety of scholars would not have been possible without the financial and moral support of the ILCEA4 (UGA), which I deeply thank too.

And finally, I wish to thank Dana Monah and Isabelle Schwartz-Gastine who were also particularly helpful in the whole process, as well as my son who accompanied me on the way to Rome where he designed the illustrations scattered on these pages while listening to remote tales of storms and oceans in a language that he did not know.



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