

## TPK IN ELSINORE: THE LARP INSIDE HAMLET (2015)

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*TPK, n. – total party kill; when a role-playing adventure  
ends with the death of all player-characters*



*The author (right) and his fellow Stormguard players (left), Inside Hamlet 2015 (photo by Erik Pihl, used with permission)*

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1602) is one of the modern world's most widely performed and multi-generationally, cross-culturally

relevant works of theater. The tale of a doomed prince, his equally doomed revenge plot against his father's murderer, and thrice-doomed family and kingdom has become a rubric for the representation of tragic failure born of existential frustration and indecision. To make a game out of it seems both natural, and yet somehow overdetermined: games provoke us to engage with failure (Juul, 2013), but *Hamlet* asks us to confer our interpretation special significance. The play is an undisputed classic, oft-taught at that. Most of the global middle and upper-classes are both familiar with it and have a ready interpretation at hand. *Hamlet* has been adapted in game form many times: *Hamlet or the Last Game without MMORPG Features, Shaders and Product Placement* (mif2000, 2010) as an ironic mobile puzzle game, Matthew McFarland's *A Tragedy in Five Acts* (2013) as a tabletop role-playing game, Ryan North's *To Be Or Not To Be: A Chooseable-Path Adventure* (2016) as an interactive gamebook, *Elsinore* (Golden Glitch, 2017) as a time-looping adventure game, and so forth. Unlike tone-deaf prior literary adaptations such as the Nintendo sidescroller *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (SETA 1989) based on Mark Twain's book, *Hamlet* games openly experiment with games as storytelling vehicles and invoke notable actions and dynamics from the play itself. Adapting *Hamlet*, after all, means close attention paid to the way narrative failure is rewarded.

Narrative failure in live-action role-playing (larp) is a cognitive and somatic enterprise. Larp, only slightly divorced from theater in principle (Bowman, 2015), permits a "first-person audience" view of its content (Sandberg, 2004; Montola and Holopainen, 2012): the players themselves are the most important recipients of the larp performance, and their experience is fundamental to its final interpretation. Larp designers then may then craft a full-body experience that lets them play pretend and engage in decadence. *Inside Hamlet* (2015) is one such Nordic larp experience. The game is a two-day event written by Bjarke

Pedersen, Martin Ericsson, Johanna Koljonen, and Simon Svensson. Best played to be believed, *Inside Hamlet* is seen here through the lens of actual play, a thick description of what it was like. I describe several aspects of the design, my player experience, how the game structurally encourages fateplay (Fatland 2000) and steering (Montola, Saitta, and Stenros, 2015), as well as the larp's progeny over the past 5 years. *Inside Hamlet* adapted the mature content and subtext of Hamlet into an appropriate game form that models how adult players can calibrate their desires, wishes, and actions. In other words, what Hamlet accomplished for drama many centuries ago, *Inside Hamlet* may have accomplished for larp in the 21st century.

#### THE POWER OF LARP

Prevailing schools of thought often mean “tabletop” when they say the words “analog games” or “non-digital games,” but larp is certainly analog yet requires no table. Larp has its roots in Babylonian ritual, pre-dating theatre as a means of expression (Stark, 2012; Ericsson, 2014), and manifested itself in centuries of theme parties, parlor games, masquerades, and dancing games before being codified in its present form largely on American college campuses and in European forests in the late 1970s and early 1980s. By the 1990s, several primary genres of larp had emerged: fantasy larp using foam swords, “vampire” supernatural or cyberpunk urban intrigue, ship larps which involve pretending to be on a spaceship or sailing boat, historical reenactment larps, and “parlor larps,” which run the gamut from medieval court intrigues to kitchen-sink dramas.

There are many, many motivations to larp (McDiarmid, 2011), but the ones of interest in this essay are twofold: the desire to be someone else, coupled with the desire to see social systems work themselves out, with tragic consequences. Larpers do not so much suspend their sense of disbelief as willingly activate their ability to pretend, with a mind that they are but one

protagonist among a sea of protagonists. While pretending, larpers seek activities to do -- not only talking to people, but also to hatch schemes that will have in-game consequences, perform rituals, fight, flirt, etc. -- and some of these activities stretch beyond a player's normal comfort zone. In a 2013 talk, Johanna Koljonen describes "alibis for interaction," or the ways in which certain rituals and affordances prompt human beings to engage in heightened interaction, including interactive play. Larp lets one don the mantle of a character, and then deploy this alibi of a character to engage in interaction outside the purview of normal experience.



*Characters gather in the court of King Claudius, Inside Hamlet Run 1 – 2018 (photo by Boris Bernhard, used with permission)*

When I am larping, I can suddenly engage in mechanics to cast spells, kill others, persuade others against their interests, have sex, or threaten other characters with my non-existent pet tiger. I can also use these mechanics to opt in or opt out of certain play

experiences, thus modulating the forms of fantasy that I am able to engage in.

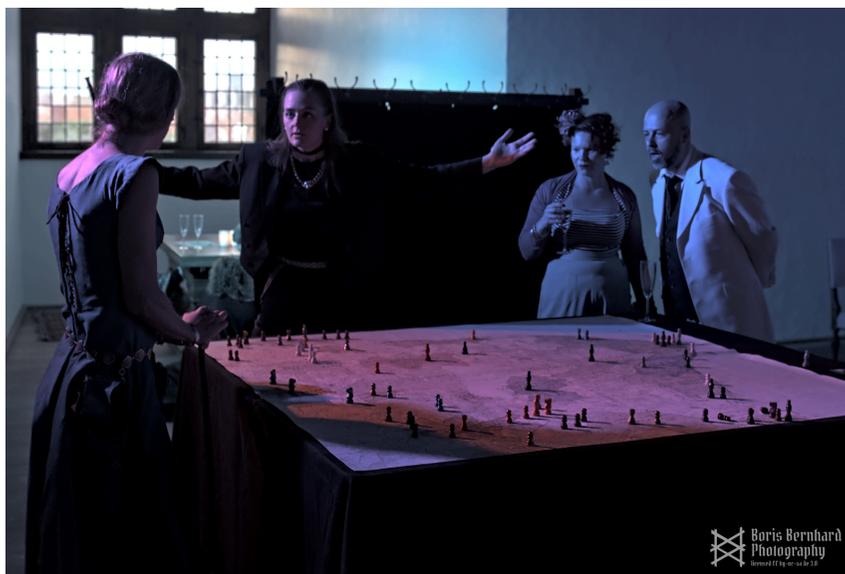
But as Lizzie Stark (2016) and Eirik Fatland (2014) argue, larp also helps create temporary, social realities, instantiating sociological fictions in prototype form. Larp as a technical form is “storytelling for the network age” (Saitta, 2017); a way of enacting social systems in real time, and perhaps brainstorming alternatives. Certain forms of larp may fall under the umbrella of political modernism, role-playing used to form a Brechtian distancing from the subject material (Torner, 2018). Other forms tend toward escapism, but can never erase political and social ideology from their designs. Larp lets us immerse in a role and interact, but also maintain a meta-level perspective of the social outcomes. I write all this to frame my play experience of *Inside Hamlet* Run 1 in a positive light, for I -- a Jewish-American larper -- wound up playing the head of a peacock regiment that developed into a fascist brotherhood before dying in a bloodbath, and I still do not know how to feel about it.

#### INSIDE *INSIDE* HAMLET

Imagine the following alternate history: the French Revolution never happened, Denmark never became a democracy, and in 1939 the country supplants Nazi Germany as an authoritarian state with imperial designs and corrupt, autocratic policies. Following the recent death of Old Hamlet, King Claudius has assumed absolute power over the state and military, with a Gestapo-style secret police at his disposal on the one hand and a squabbling viper’s nest of aristocratic families trying to curry his favor on the other. Meanwhile, the Soviet communist revolution has swept far into Europe; Norwegians led by revolutionary Fortinbras have seized the means of production in their home country and have assembled a ragtag-but-fierce army that also inspires parts of the Danish populace to revolt. Ensnared in Castle Elsinore and surrounded by defenses, the Danish elite

command their seemingly invincible armies to take strategic European sites and put down communists. But morale appears to be waning. How long can members of the court remain protected when young Hamlet returns to court suspecting something amiss about his father's death? Or when some of the castleguard claim to be possessed by Old Hamlet's ghost, who harbors a few secrets of his own?

*Inside Hamlet* is an explicitly Marxist reading of Hamlet that places the story in a context that, for lack of a better analogy, resembles Hitler's bunker in the final days of World War II. An illegitimate coronation quickly transforms into a claustrophobic castle under siege, and then into a murder-suicide orgy comparable to the bloody end of the original play. Of interest is the fact that the game is based on a legendary Swedish-language larp Hamlet Inside (2002) mentioned in Jane McGonigal's 2011 book *Reality Is Broken*, but was re-written and re-configured so it could run twice in Fall 2015 for an English-speaking international audience from 11 different countries in Kronborg, the very Danish castle "Elsinore" at the center of Shakespeare's play. The fact that the play is an English story about the Danish court makes the English language and Danish location all the more poignant. *Inside Hamlet* ran four more times between Fall 2017 and 2018.



*Nobility and military characters squabble near the war board, Inside Hamlet Run 1  
(photo by Boris Bernhard, used with permission)*

The game takes place in three Acts over two days: there are workshops during the afternoon on Friday introducing the game's rules and social groups; Act One of the game commences early Friday evening and ends in a party around midnight; players go to sleep and meet in workshops to re-calibrate their play on Saturday morning; Act Two commences after lunch; a dinner break between the acts allows for more meta-level discussion; Act Three ends the game by Saturday midnight; there is an after-party; and the event itself closes with a Sunday debrief. The game cost 1500 kr (around 240 USD), which includes room and board. Besides the rigid Act structure, there are keywords that help players modulate their play: one says "pure" to de-escalate a scene and "rotten" to encourage a partner to intensify whatever emotional play they're engaged in. As the game involves in-game drinking, the act of spiking a drink with vinegar changes over the course of the game. If one drinks something laced with vinegar in Act One, the player is to act

as if hit with a strong aphrodisiac; in Act Two, it becomes a truth serum; in Act Three, it's a poison. Fateplay guides much of the player's decision-making: it is near 100% certain that the character will die, so how one arrives at that death is partially up to the player.

My experience playing *Inside Hamlet* started with buzz and marketing materials released in 2014 promising a groundbreaking, edgy larp experience -- "You are the rot in the state of Denmark." -- with an additional enticement: playing in the actual castle of Elsinore. Castle Kronborg, located in Helsingør, Denmark, was built in the 1570s as a Renaissance-era upgrade to the original 1420s fortress built by King Eric of Pomerania. Significant are the castle's cobble-stoned courtyard, epic ramparts, spiral staircases and large-arched interior rooms, where Shakespeare's Hamlet has been performed hundreds of times over centuries.

Shortly after I signed up for the larp, I received and filled out a questionnaire that included logistical details such as dietary preferences as well as story-relevant questions about what larger themes I'd like to play on. I marked a checkbox declaring "I wouldn't mind playing a leadership role," which turned out to be crucial for my eventual casting. A few days later, I received my character as a PDF per email: Colonel Perdue.

Colonel Perdue was the leader of the Stormguard, the decorative military unit defending the royal family. He served as the fabricated "boss" to actual Hamlet characters Marcellus and Bernardo. Recalling the play, the primary action of the guardsmen is to run around after Old Hamlet's ghost, and to stand idly by as the Royals kill each other in dishonorable combat. My character sheet for Perdue opened with a quote from an entirely different Shakespeare play ("It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing". --Macbeth, Act V) and two paragraphs of short description of an overworked officer

who may be too jaded already to do much more than “muddle on” in defending the castle. The next section of the character sheet detailed Perdue’s relations with various characters in the larp, including his long-time friend, the Companion (prostitute) Giselle. His tasks in the game under a section titled “To be” included trying to do his best as Stormguard leader, decide who will be the next Watch-Sergeant, “stay strong when others come unravelled,” and of course figure out what all the ghost nonsense was about. His unsavory tasks under the “Not to be” subheader -- i.e., nasty things that I had the alibi to do during the larp, given fellow players’ consent -- included casually hurting someone, naming an arbitrary person Watch-Sergeant, collapse from overwork, “try to get an orgy going,” punish Marcellus for spreading ghost stories, and “utilize unnecessary force to keep the peace.” Finally, Perdue’s vice was introduced as “Lust. For everybody.” Hoo boy.

We were living in Berlin at the time, so I was able to procure at the Mauerpark flea market a former East German police uniform for 40 euros, along with an intimidating hat and set of boots. Upon arrival in Helsingør, we accumulated additional decoration and fake weaponry: cap pistols, several dull sabers, and assorted war medals to pin on ourselves. My guardsmen Bernardo, Francisco, and Marcellus and I looked like the motley, over-decorated paramilitary crew ready to guard the royal family. Our arrival at the castle meant workshops: every Nordic larp now comes with several hours, if not a full day, worth of workshops so that players can align with the goals and play style of the larp. Held in the old fortress barracks, these workshops were to teach us the “rules of engagement,” namely safe words, methods of tapping out of a scene, and how to invite other players into our stories. I learned, too, that actual punches were OK as long as they were consensual, and that “what happens in Elsinore, stays in Elsinore.” Essentially, we would do our best never to connect a character or player’s actions to a particular

person in our post-game narration of events in the larp. Apparently the 2002 Hamlet Inside run had some risqué sexual activity among 20-something larpers while in-character. The organizers wanted to be sure that we had the alibi for that too. We were also informed that no characters could be killed before the second half of Act Three.



*Two players fence live with real foils and kit while others look on, Inside Hamlet Run 1 – 2018 (photo by Boris Bernhard, used with permission)*

The first adventure was simply entering the castle, which was not so easy for dozens of larpers in 1930s-appropriate high-heeled costumes and elaborate clothing and props which they then had to maneuver up tight spiral staircases with no railings. We entered into a drab stone room with huge wooden beams, an epic sound set-up, and a staged throne area. Right before the game began, we were reminded by the organizers of “playing to lose,” a collaborative play style typical of Nordic larp that encourages players to enjoy watching their characters fail. Since Hamlet was a tragedy, this was easy to wrap my head around.

We were all horrible people who were going to die. No problem. The next statement, however, gave me an even stronger grip on what to do in the game. “You are all Hamlet.” This meant that Hamlet’s tragic flaws -- his lethargy, indecision, feverish action in the wrong direction, plotting, and losing -- were all for 90-some players to experience over the course of the run. This allowed me to view my play in terms of steering (Montola, Saitta, Stenros, 2015), or using my character to fulfill my player-need for structure. There were fewer and fewer “wrong” ways to play the game.

Act One had us start off with an opening meta-level scene in which we as the guardsmen conducted the first séance, given that Old Hamlet had been trying to contact us. I would deliver some lines from the play while “possessed” by Old Hamlet, and then carried off unconscious, and then the game would begin. These meta-level interludes certainly made *Inside Hamlet* feel like playable theater: every now and then, the action would shut off and the acting (with pre-written lines) would begin. The scenes helped the players take a breather, which is critical to such intense play, and occurred as naturally as cut-scenes do in video games.

Perdue was caught between a myriad number of threads. There were communists in the streets of Denmark and needed to be dealt with! But also we were loyal to Old Hamlet and desperately wanted to know what happened to him! But we were also horrible, indulgent people who mostly needed to drink, lounge around with the castle Companions, and not do much of anything at all! Act One had some court intrigue that culminated first with Hamlet having some actors put on his play that accuses Claudius of murder, and then bombs from Fortinbras’ army took us by surprise and forced us all to evacuate the Throne Room to occupy the cellar. This organizational move allowed the team to serve us dinner and drinks, as well as moved us out so they could set up the rest of the castle rooms for the next two Acts. There

was also a DJ in the cellar, providing us with ample music and ambience. Perdue gossiped much about the séances and royal family, made himself known to those characters he had relations with, and then abruptly left the party in order to take on the communists gathering outside in the streets. This was a bit of steering to let myself cross that magnificent courtyard to go to the bathroom and then take a rest in the organizers' area, as I had been going non-stop since we had arrived early that morning. I came back into the larp refreshed, at which point I started a fight with the Polish ambassador, whom I accused of being a communist. Hamlet got mad at Claudius and fled Denmark for England, leaving his entourage behind. Then the music was cranked up and we were encouraged to dance, and some sensual play had begun. Unfortunately, there were not a lot of pillows or areas to lounge in that cellar, so the affordances encouraged me to stand around and talk, mostly. By the end of the night, our group returned to our room both exhausted and angry -- this larp could not decide whether or not it was a weird dance party in a castle basement or a Shakespearean urban intrigue larp. A player among us chose to depart the game for good the following morning. We were restless, for sure, wondering where our play was headed. And that was when the design saved us.

The morning was spent at the hostel, out of character. We ate breakfast as players, got to talk a little bit about some meta-level issues, and began another workshop. The workshop let me rebuild lots of small connections between various characters, as well as begin to establish limits of consent for failure play. For example, the Polish ambassador agreed upon how hard I ought to hit him. I chatted with Hamlet's entourage, who were in need of an Act Two plotline, and I said "Well, if Act Two has us under siege by Fortinbras' army, then I've deputized you all as new Stormguard members. Act Two can be your training!" That turned out to be a pivotal decision.

Refreshed, our Stormguard group began Act Two by patrolling

the ramparts of the castle. This meant physically leaving the play area and being photographed by a number of Japanese tourists as we sang a battle hymn together slightly out of key. We returned and started teaching the song, which we had just taught ourselves as players, to our new recruits from Hamlet's entourage. Suddenly, we had an established mentoring relationship and Stormguard values began to emerge and solidify due to intense play. It is difficult to even summarize the flurry of activity in Act Two. Giselle (the Companion) and Perdue confess their feelings to each other and fantasize about running off. The guardsmen continue to conduct séances and almost -- but not quite -- get an answer out of Old Hamlet about who killed him. At one point, a clergyman deceives one of the guardsmen and we decide to go rough him up. It was a particularly disturbing scene, in which we were boot-stomping a helpless man, but complicated by the meta-level fact that the player chose not to take the fictional punches very well; he acted as if nothing much had happened to him. We all had failed to negotiate boundaries of consent, in this instance. Nevertheless, such activities also gave play to others: the new recruits began to show off their brutal power over others, and they got to gaze into the amoral heart of our organization. Late in Act Two, Claudius begins to show extreme signs of faltering leadership, at which point we choose to declare loyalty to ourselves as Stormguard rather than the crown. Ophelia dies in the bathtub, and it is the Stormguard's duty to carry the larper's body before the Royals, who are aghast in horror. We are then given a dinner break before Act Three.

The dinner break was unforgettable. We had been instructed that Act Three would continue as with Act Two until Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead (a Stoppard reference), at which point our characters could then kill any characters we wanted until the end of the Act. Players whose characters were killed would lie in place until someone physically carried them, via 1930s stretcher, through the castle into the room designated as a chapel, where

they would lie. Intermittently, “dead” players could leave the larp through a side door from the chapel and join the after-party in the basement. What this encouraged the Stormguard to do was to draw up a “kill list.” Who were the characters who most deserved death? The clergyman, obviously. We devised a signal that, once Rosencrantz & Guildenstern’s meta-death scene had elapsed, would have us gather and destroy him. But whom else would we kill? All of the personal grudges built up over the larp spilled out, various Stormguard enemies and rivals among them. Our energy for Act Three was high and our weapons ready.



*A character in Act 3 has a nasty surprise in store for them. Photo of Inside Hamlet Run 1 – 2018 by Boris Bernhard, used with permission*

Act Three delivered to us the results of previous efforts. It turned out that half of our new recruits from Hamlet’s entourage were actually communists (!) and the other half were sadists, exploiting the Stormguard office for profit. Meanwhile, the Stormguard themselves were incompetent enough to let Hamlet sneak back into the castle with the help of Horatio. I was able to play on this

extreme dramatic irony when Perdue mused aloud to Horatio how he had no idea how Hamlet got past all his guards. The communists in my ranks pushed hard on the angle that, since we were no longer loyal to Claudius, we could open the gates to Fortinbras and he would hopefully spare our lives. Giselle lured Perdue away from the action and he got a chance to lounge around amidst all the intrigue. And then Rosencrantz & Guildenstern died in a meta-scene, and the bloodshed began -- the TPK.

Captain Bernardo was swift with his whistle and we immediately found the clergyman. In the fiction, we described to the player that we threw him down the spiral staircase, and then we brought him out to the courtyard, where we first shot and then beheaded him. Never have I felt so satisfied and so conflicted about inflicting a death on someone in-game. Our crew was then drawn into a final séance with a psychic and a number of spirituals, wherein we finally learned Old Hamlet was indeed slain by the treacherous Claudius. But there was something malevolent about that spirit, because he wound up cutting down several people in the ritual. The Stormguard suddenly had a player-logistical task on its hands: carting several bodies the long way to the chapel, one by one. Marcellus took a pause from this work, only to be called into a duel and fatally injured. The Stormguard sang a hymn in honor of his demise. I was so tired afterward that I settled onto the couch next to Giselle, who started to talk to me about leaving the castle forever. "Aren't we... a part of the castle, the Companions and the Stormguard?" I asked, suggesting that we would outlast any corrupt regime. It was at that point that Fernando showed up with 2 champagne bottles. He gave one to each of us. Unbeknownst to me, Fernando's advances had been rejected by Giselle earlier in the game. Giselle's bottle was poisoned; mine was not. Giselle took a swig, realized she had been killed, and chose to take Perdue with her, strangling me right then and there on the couch. Fernando

returned to find me dead, but when he checked on Giselle, she strangled him too with her dying breath. I sat “dead” on the couch for quite a long time before I was then carted off to the chapel, having the pleasure of then having my gun stripped off me by a rival. Quietly, I snuck out down to the courtyard and then to the cellar, where the game was over and I could drop character entirely. The full debrief would be at the hostel in the morning, so we partied into the night, swapping character stories.

#### OUTSIDE *INSIDE HAMLET*

Games are genealogical, and all designs emerge from iterations of previous ones. In the case of *Inside Hamlet*, its direct design predecessor would be the Swedish spaceship larp Monitor Celestra (2013) co-created between Cecilia Dolk and Martin Ericsson and run three times on the real destroyer ship Småland. Monitor Celestra was inspired by the television show *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2006), and thus had its play divided into Episodes, which would then become *Inside Hamlet*'s Act structure. That larp also had stark divisions between those serving on the Bridge and those who were at the lowest levels of the ship, showing off the kind of class-structure play that would emerge between *Inside Hamlet*'s Royals, Nobility, and everyone else. This should remind us that larp design is deeper than the typical traded genres. There are deep structures to larps that transcend fantasy boffer, urban intrigue, spaceship, and/or parlor larp distinctions. It also points to another source of inspiration for *Inside Hamlet*'s development: television. Royal Houses in *Inside Hamlet* take inspiration from, among others, *Sons of Anarchy* (2008), *Game of Thrones* (2011), and *Dune* (2000). Adaptation of serialized entertainment into easy-to-understand character networks of larp is not an uncommon practice.

*Inside Hamlet* would also lay the groundwork for several further important Nordic larp developments. One was the acquisition

of White Wolf by Paradox Interactive and the appointment of Ericsson to create the new line of World of Darkness larps and TRPGs. Ericsson would work together with effectively the same team as *Inside Hamlet* -- including Pedersen and Koljonen -- to deliver the first new World of Darkness larp *End of the Line* (2016), which had its initial run in an abandoned squat near Helsinki (Bowman, 2016). There, much as with *Inside Hamlet*, the event was organized as a party experience in a unique location that contained both alibis for interaction -- a predator-prey relationship between vampires and humans present -- and characters who were essentially horrible people who should be "played to lose." *End of the Line* joined *College of Wizardry* (2014) as a high-profile Nordic genre larp that would be run in the United States and receive critical accolades, including a nomination for a Diana Jones Award. Its direct descendents, now that further runs of *Inside Hamlet* have been postponed indefinitely due to Danish heritage politics dealing with Kronborg, can be found in the horror larp *Baphomet* (2017). This has been run numerous times at Lungholm Castle in Denmark, and presents players with the personal horror of being entrapped by a death cult. Players play cultists in the 1930s who, over the course of a weekend, are alternately possessed by the gods Pan and Baphomet -- signified by the necklace they're wearing -- and given over to madness and death. *Inside Hamlet* inspired much of the safety mechanics, the costume stylings, and the overall arc of the game. Seeds of horror were planted by the tragedy of *Hamlet*, leading me to believe that, at least in terms of larp, horror and tragedy are perhaps not that far from each other.



*A character in a quiet moment, contemplating whether to die—to sleep—or continue to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, Inside Hamlet Run 1 – 2018 (photo Boris Bernhard, used with permission)*

## FINAL WORDS

Without a doubt, *Inside Hamlet* also accomplished something quite banal: re-enchanting Shakespeare's play for me. This is, however, where I took note of the experience as a literature scholar. *Inside Hamlet* had not only brought the main characters to life in the form of active co-players with whom one could drink and have intrigue, but it also made visceral the various stages of the drama as it unfolded. Act One felt like a ghost hunt, misruled state, and messed-up party all rolled together in one; Act Two was filled with intrigue and ever-complicating allegiances; Act Three with weariness and then violent, unforgiving death. Although the original took 5 acts to explore these things, centering on Hamlet and witnessing his gut-wrenchingly slow downfall, the "structures of feeling," as

Raymond Williams (1977, p. 128) once put it, are all contained within the game.

If we consider the run through the earlier-positing frameworks of larps as alibis for interaction and as temporary, social realities, then different aspects of play reveal themselves. For one thing, it is not that exciting to be a guard in a larp. The designers adapted the original *Hamlet* guard stage business into a larp-length activity: holding séances that would determine Claudius murdered the elder Hamlet. But the beautiful play we experienced turned out to be emergent: recruiting new Stormguard trainees without regard for their background and forming genuine feelings of camaraderie with them, only to have them turn out to be the exact wrong people to have in a uniform with authority. Our temporary social reality revealed a military institution increasingly folding in on itself and becoming self-serving, not dissimilar to the institution of the “thin blue line” rhetoric of the American police in the 2010s. When we served no higher purpose, then we suddenly formed an organization that would protect our own, and not only failed to do so, but adopted increasingly petty and fascistic methods to enforce our rule. Five years later, I see that *Inside Hamlet* succeeded at letting us watch ourselves become the dark social clichés we were always meant to be. “Go,” Fortinbras said at the end. “Bid the soldiers shoot.” We deserved it.



*A character mourns Ophelia, as she lies in state, Inside Hamlet Run 1 – 2018 (photo by Boris Bernhard, used with permission)*

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