Participant Abstracts

Lindsay Adams, Saint Louis University
"Empowerment or Erasure? Agency, Feminism, and Invisible Disability in *Elsinore*"

The vital question at the heart of *Hamlet* is action or inaction; the play and its titular protagonist are obsessed with choice and performance. *Elsinore* deconstructs the narrative of *Hamlet* through a time-loop game mechanic that offers a seemingly endless, and at times almost crippling, number of possible choices—utilizing the genre of science-fiction and the video game medium to address its source material's concern. *Elsinore* deconstructs the narrative of *Hamlet* through a time-loop game mechanic that offers a seemingly endless number of possible choices for Ophelia — there are thirteen different endings for *Elsinore*, each tellingly beginning with the line, "This is the fate I choose." The choice is given back to her and by extension the player. *Elsinore* uses its medium to explore the discursive possibilities of *Hamlet* and acknowledge more than one narrative of womanhood. The game looks to re-imagine the play through an intersectional lens; in this adaptation Ophelia is a biracial woman who grapples with prejudice due to her interlocking identities. Yet this intersectionality does not seem to extend to her identity as a disabled woman.

Elsinore chooses to erase Ophelia's identity as a person living with a mental disability. Its feminist rewrites make Ophelia a protagonist with agency over her own choices but turns her madness into a performance or a false patriarchal assumption. It seems to be impossible for Ophelia to be both empowered and disabled, as if two are mutually exclusive. This is erasure packaged as feel-good feminist adaptation. Erasing Ophelia's disability suggests that the only way to be empowered or have agency over one's life is to be Able-bodied. The implicit assumption in this adaptation is that the only way for Ophelia's story to end up happily is for her not to have a mental disability. She can survive as a biracial woman in Elsinore's court, but if she is 'crazy' it would seem ending up in a river drowned is her only possible conclusion. The most frustrating part of this choice is that the video game medium could have offered a powerfully immersive experience—placing (mostly abled) players into the position of a woman living with a mental disability and forcing them to view the world from her perspective and deepen their understanding and empathy for this often invisible community.

Artists have an ethical responsibility when handling narratives of disability. This is further heightened when adapting for mass consumption one of the few canonical characters that have an invisible disability. Ophelia speaks to a broad audience, both in Shakespeare's time and our own today. She has become deeply associated with suicidal teenagerhood due to psychology books like Mary Pipher*'s Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*. This, and the use of the play as a teaching text, solidified Ophelia as both a trope and point of identification for young adult women, especially those with invisible disabilities. My experience teaching *Hamlet* to young women confirms Ophelia's continued appeal and fascination—they are passionate, confused, and furious about her treatment in the play, both by the playwright and the other characters. They are left with questions, like I am after playing through *Elsinore*: Why is disability so often ignored even by creators that are clearly well-intentioned and who wish to tell diverse stories? How could we potentially use video games and other methods of play to explore Ophelia and her disability? We need a new narrative of Ophelia, one that isn't Ableist in

its assumptions and concerns. We need the narrative where Ophelia is both living with her invisible disability and surviving with it.

Nora L. Corrigan, Mississippi University for Women

"To Sport and to Work: Play and the Education of Princes in *Love's Labour's Lost* and the *Henry IV* Plays"

Though not often considered in relation to each other, *Love's Labour's Lost* and the two-part *Henry IV* cycle end with the death of an old king and the accession of his young successor, and tell the story of that successor's coming of age. All three plays devote extensive stage time to the future ruler's participation in varied forms of game and sport – hunting, practical jokes, amateur theatricals, courtly "games" of wit and love. Precisely what is at stake in these playful interludes becomes clear only in retrospect, as the tone abruptly turns serious. I shall argue that it is through play that Prince Hal and the Princess of France learn *how* to wield power – particularly the soft power of interpersonal relationships. Their skill and facility at these seemingly frivolous activities stands in sharp contrast to less successful rulers and would-be rulers, including Hotspur, the Dauphin in *Henry V*, and King Ferdinand, who are either dismissive of the value of play or understand it in extremely limited terms. I will also argue that *Love's Labour's Lost* is worth taking seriously, both on its own terms as a sophisticated exploration of the relationship between play, learning, and rule, and as an early working-out of the ideas and dramatic structure that Shakespeare would later use to great effect in the second tetralogy of history plays.

Jennifer Flaherty, Georgia College

"*The Tempest* in *Life is Strange: Before the Storm*"

Game Publisher Square Enix followed up its award-winning graphic adventure video game *Life is Strange* (2015) with prequel series *Life is Strange: Before the Storm* (2017). While the plot of *Life is Strange* hinges on the time-travel mechanic that main character Max Caulfield uses to prevent the murder of her estranged friend Chloe Price and solve the mystery of missing teen Rachel Amber, *Before the Storm* does not include supernatural elements in the game mechanics or storylines. Instead, it offers a glimpse into the relationship that develops between Chloe and Rachel years before the events of *Life is Strange*, allowing players to choose Chloe's words and actions in three episodes. The original *Life is Strange* makes no reference to Shakespeare, but the prequel series is influenced by *The Tempest*. Each episode is named for a line from Shakespeare's play ("Awake," "Brave New World," and "Hell is Empty"). In the second episode, "Brave New World," Chloe must step into the role of Ariel in a school production of the play, playing opposite Rachel's Prospero. Through the game's decision mechanic, players choose Chole's lines, as well as her response when Rachel goes off-script in their first scene together. My paper will examine how the plot utilizes the thematic elements of *The Tempest* to advance the plot and build the relationship between Rachel and Chloe, as well as the game mechanics that allow players to step into the role of an unprepared actor playing Ariel in a live production.

Bryan D. Nakawaki, Erie, PA

Hall-of-Fame Game: Shakespeare, Gaming, and the Mass Market

The Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester, New York, has been home to the National Toy Hall of Fame since 2002. Of the seventy-four toys enshrined in this American hall, at least a dozen might more accurately be described as games or game systems—a diverse list that includes *Monopoly*, chess, the Atari 2600, and the fantasy role-playing game *Dungeons & Dragons*. Per the museum's website, a toy must meet certain criteria to be considered for induction into the hall:

   1) Icon Status: The toy is widely recognized, respected, and remembered.
   2) Longevity: The toy is more than just a passing fad.
   3) Discovery: The toy fosters learning, creativity, or discovery through play.
   4) Innovation: The toy profoundly changed play or toy design.

None of the games enshrined in the hall evokes immediate thoughts of William Shakespeare. This is probably not surprising. Since 2008, an array of scholars including Michael Best, Peter Holland, Laurie Osborne, Gina Bloom, Brett Greatley-Hirsch, and Vernon Dickson have shed light on Shakespeare's growing presence in games of different sorts—board games, computer games, card games, and video games. So far, however, each of the games these scholars have examined has been a hobbyist game rather than a mass-market one, in terms of its commercial success. If it's even possible, it must be exceedingly difficult for a game to obtain "icon status" when comparatively few people purchase and play it. These observations collectively led me to consider the two questions that inspired this paper: 1) Can I envision a game explicitly focused on Shakespeare or his drama being inducted into the National Toy Hall of Fame? 2) If the answer is no, what might have to change for this to become a realistic possibility?

Ian F. MacInnes, Albion College
False as Dice: Chance, Hazard, and the Crisis of Heroic Fortune

The sixteenth century was a period of profound change in the European epistemology of risk and chance. Although the theoretical mathematics of probability was only a glimmer in the works of Cardano and Galileo, Europe's mercantilist economy was conducting a large empirical inquiry into probability as those whose fortunes depended on trade resorted to an increasingly sophisticated variety of means for raising and protecting invested capital by managing and measuring risk. The very idea that chance could be anticipated, enumerated, and ultimately even sold (as insurance) would profoundly unsettle attitudes toward fortune, putting into tension probabilistic and measurable chance with the older determinism of Divine Providence. It is no accident, therefore, that dice games, in particular the game of hazard, were as popular as they were reviled at the end the sixteenth century. A throw of the dice brought the early moderns as close as possible to the mainspring of Fortune, whether the dice reflected a rational and probabilistic future or whether they were weighted by Special Providence, by Luck or by a nefarious human hand. These tensions help explain why so many of Shakespeare's tragic heroes, from Richard III to Antony, imagine their future in the language of gambling games like hazard. Drawing on early modern gambling texts, maritime law, mathematics, and economic theory, I argue that the gambling language Shakespeare attributes to his tragic heroes reflects a critical change in the nature of Fortune and the meaning of human action

Emily Shearer, Los Angeles, CA
Sad Stories of the Deaths of Kings: Emergent and Reparative Storytelling in Forms of Play(s)

Where does the play exist? Is it the physical artifact of the prompt book, collated with directorial notes, or the mass-market production of a playtext? Is it what occurs on stage? How do we account for the differences between performances, night after night? Or in productions across decades and centuries? Reparative reading offers us a way to consider how plays, and particularly their stagings, can inhabit "the instability and mutual inscription" that Sedgwick attributes to Klein's theory of positions. Games, at least at first look, might appear less unstable than the play, even if their verb of interaction is that same slippery play that is attached to the theatre. Even though a game's boundaries are broader than a play's and do not necessarily lead to one canonical ending the way a play's do, there are nonetheless crucial parameters that the work sets on the experience. While non-digital games have these parameters as well, this paper takes up the experience of digital games with storytelling events driven by a combination of a player's choices and the game's underlying systems and rules in relation to the total narrative possibility space, described by the term "story volume." This approach to game narrative is called emergent narrative, or in cases where such actions impact other parts of the game than the story, emergent behavior. Accordingly, this paper considers video games as sites of dramatic reinterpretation, for if games with emergent narratives can possess theatricality, and their structure resembles a play script, I claim that it is productive to consider the inverse: that a play has a story volume as well.

Maggie Vinter, Case Western Reserve University
Tennis and Muscle Memory in *Henry V*

This paper explores the relationship between tennis and early modern theater. Recent work at the intersection of game studies and performance studies has focused largely on virtual playable media, and to a lesser extent on "sitting pastimes" such as cards and chess. Like these other sorts of games, athletic sports are interactive entertainment experiences that can illuminate peculiar forms of agency, temporality and moral responsibility proper to players, performers and spectators. In addition, the embodied and physically demanding nature of their gameplay possesses a close affinity to the kinetic dimensions of dramatic performance. At least some early modern dramatists, I argue, recognized and exploited this proximity. In Shakespeare's Henry V, Henry's response to the dauphin's gift of tennis balls establishes connections between tennis, warfare and "mocking" mimetic enactment. These affinities provide a pretext for Henry's invasion of France, but also offer an implicit theory that explains forms of muscle memory that Henry seeks to evoke in his soldiers and that the Chorus seeks to awaken in the audience.