

## *Quinnopolis vs. Hamlet* at the Shakespeare

Association of America Annual Meeting, April 2006

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*Quinnopolis vs. Hamlet*, by David Dalton, Jeremy Beck, and

Christopher Patrick Mullen. *Quinnopolis, NY*. Shakespeare

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15, 2006. *Performed by* Jeremy Beck and Christopher Yeatts.

This year's annual Shakespeare Association of America meeting in Philadelphia hosted a provocative adaptation of *Hamlet* by the theater company Quinnopolis, NY. Despite being transplanted from its ambient-rich Manhattan performance spaces to the sterility of a Loews ballroom, the two-man production, titled *Quinnopolis vs. Hamlet*, impressed SAA members with a meditation on Shakespeare's play that is both keenly intellectual and deeply moving, managing — against odds — to find new and interesting things to say about and with *Hamlet*. The following group of essays by Shakespeare Association of America members Regina Buccola, Peter Kanelos, Paul Menzer, Scott Newstok, and Helen Ostovich respond to this performance.

In their own meditations on *Quinnopolis vs. Hamlet*, these scholars discover something that is central to the play as well as to The Play — to *Hamlet* itself. As several of the authors note, the play's title suggests an inherent antagonism between Quinnopolis and *Hamlet*, an antagonism that Menzer and Newstok describe through the apt metaphor of boxing. On its surface, boxing is the most directly confrontational of sports, the most distilled form of athletic competition. And yet, as the rounds of any good match wear on, the physical breakdown of the combatants transforms confrontation into symbiosis, other into self: bodies cling together in exhaustion, blood mixes with blood and sweat with sweat.

Just so, as these essays suggest, *Quinnopolis vs. Hamlet* stages a gradual breakdown of the rivalry between Quinnopolis and *Hamlet*, so that by the end of the play violence signals both rejection and consummation. In their rich reflections on the play's title, properties, staging, and

text, these essays allude to the ambivalent relationship to violence at the heart of *Quinnopolis's* many layers of Hamlets and *Hamlets*: the violence within and the violence without; the violence we do to the play and the violence it does to us.