

Jungian Perspectives of Shakespeare's Hamlet

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Hamlet: Jungian Perspectives

The term consciousness refers to "one's awareness of internal and external stimuli. The unconscious contains thoughts, memories, and desires that are well below the surface of awareness but that nonetheless exert great influence on behavior." (Weiten) In the view of the Jungian [analyst](#), there are two forces that drive Hamlet. One is his anima, which is the "personification of the feminine nature of a man's unconscious" (Platania). The second is Hamlet's desire to reach individuation, which will be discussed later. In reference to the anima, Platania states that "we experience the opposite sex as the lost part of our own selves." There is in each man a feminine side hidden beneath his masculinity.

The mystery of Shakespeare's Hamlet is a phantom of literary debate that has haunted readers throughout the centuries. Hamlet is a complete enigma; a puzzle scholars have tried to piece together since his introduction to the literary world. Throughout the course of Hamlet, the reader is constantly striving to rationalize Hamlet's odd behavior, mostly through the play's written text. In doing so, many readers mistakenly draw their conclusions based on the surface content of Hamlet's statements and actions.

When drawing into question Hamlet's actions as well as his reasons for acting, many assume that Hamlet himself is fully aware of his own motives. This [assumption](#) in itself produces the very matter in question. Take for example Hamlet's hesitation to kill the king. Hamlet believes that his desire to kill King Claudius is driven by his fathers' demand for revenge. If this were true, Hamlet would kill Claudius the moment he has the chance, if not the moment he knows for [sure](#) that Claudius is guilty of murdering his father. Why does Hamlet hesitate? One must call into question what Hamlet holds to be true. If Hamlet's given motivation for killing the king is legitimate, then Claudius should die at about Act 3. Because Hamlet's actions do not correspond with his given reasoning, one is forced to look for an alternate explanation for Hamlet's behavior. In doing so, one will come to the conclusion that Hamlet is driven by forces other than what is obvious to the reader, as well as Hamlet himself. Given this example, one must denounce the assumption that Hamlet is aware of the forces that motivate him, and understand that Hamlet's true motivation is unconscious. This unconscious force is the true reason behind Hamlet's mysterious behavior.

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