

# Hamlet – The lonely only and his siblings

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## Abstract

This paper introduces the importance of siblings in the work of William Shakespeare: how psychoanalysis might help us grasp their role in his plays and how, in turn, Shakespeare can help us flesh out a place for them in psychoanalytic theory. Focusing on Hamlet, an only child, the paper builds on the author's previous work positing a 'sibling trauma' at around the age of two. It is suggested that this sibling trauma, which takes place in reality or in fantasy, offers a way of understanding Hamlet – and sibling relationships – from the perspective of lateral relationships. The paper offers an understanding of the confusion between fathers and brothers, mothers and sisters, and how these become clearer in Hamlet's trajectory from melancholia to mourning, from 'lonely only' to a place in the brotherhood (and sisterhood) of man.