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Was it Love or Lust?

The purpose for this research paper is to investigate what kind of relationship Gertrude and Claudius had. Claudius proves throughout the play how important the Queen is to him. The way Gertrude and Claudius became each other’s spouse was not revealed in the play, even though, Gertrude and Claudius were happily married. However, their marriage may have occurred because they were in love. Claudius’s actions in *Hamlet* when Gertrude went to drink the poison, question if his love for her was stronger than his love for power. Not to mention, he was the previous King’s brother, which could lead the reader to believe he did indeed have an alternative motive.

Claudius proved throughout the play how important the Queen is to him. Claudius stated, “The queen his mother lives almost by his looks; and for myself-my virtue or my plague, be it either which-she's so conjunctive to my life and soul, that, as the star moves not but in his sphere, I could not but by her” (4.7.13-18). It is revealed through his words that Gertrude is apart of his life and soul. In addition, Claudius’s love for Gertrude shows that she makes his life worth living. He expresses that he would do anything for her; she is his wife and queen.

The way Gertrude and Claudius became each other’s spouse was not revealed in the play. In the article, “Gertrude and Claudius” it was stated, “After killing King Hamlet, Claudius approaches Gertrude and she falls for his inducements and agrees to marry him. He lusts for her but she refuses him — no sex before marriage — she lives by the Christian ethic.” Claudius was the one who went after Gertrude and convinced her to marry him. In other words, Gertrude’s decision to marry was because she began to fall in love again, not to help Claudius gain power.

Gertrude and Claudius were both portrayed as being happily married. Johnson stated, “After the marriage, she and Claudius seemed to be very united and happy together.” It was questioned if their marriage was real and their happiness proved it was. That is to say that both of their intentions were good. If that is true, then Claudius couldn’t have married Gertrude solely for the throne if he was able to gain it without marrying her. To obtain the throne, it had to be voted on and approved by the state council. Therefore, Gertrude would have had to marry Claudius in order to maintain her position as Queen.

Gertrude’s marriage to Claudius is suspected to have occurred because they were in love. Schulman stated, “You ask if Gertrude married "for love or pleasure".  If only pleasure, then why bother marrying?  What would she have to gain by it?  She was already Queen.” Gertrude was in fact already Queen so the act of marrying Claudius had to be out of love since there was nothing to gain. For this reason, it would have been pointless for Gertrude to remarry.

Claudius’s actions in *Hamlet* question if he really loved Gertrude. In the movie *Hamlet*, Ophelia drinks the poisoned cup without Claudius stopping her. It proves that Claudius loved his power over the kingdom more than his own wife. In other words, his motive to marry her seems to be questionable enough if it was out of love or lust for power. He stated in *Hamlet,* that he murdered his brother for “my crown, mine own ambition and my queen.”In other words, it appears that Claudius had more than one motive.

The kind of relationship Gertrude and Claudius had was portrayed as loving and united throughout *Hamlet*. In the play, it is shown how important his Queen is to him as he started his new life. Although the way their love arose was never exposed, their marriage is still suspected to have occurred because they were in love. This may be true but Claudius’s actions when Gertrude went to take the sip of poison conflicted with that reasoning. In other words, his love for the power over the kingdom was stronger than the love for his own wife.

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