Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes: A Revaluation

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LONG DISMISSED AS an immature play with no intrinsic merit, *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes* (ca. 1570–1583) quite thoroughly debates issues of contemporary political interest. This essay seeks to restore *Clyomon* from its undistinguished position in Renaissance studies by showing how it dramatically supports Queen Elizabeth's use of chivalry as an ideology of power and order and criticizes military adventurism. By reading this play as a political text, in this essay I employ the methodologies of New Historicism, which identifies literature as only one of many cultural discourses taking part in the negotiation of power. "Representations of the world in written discourse," observes Louis A. Montrose, "are engaged in constructing the world, in shaping the modalities of social reality, and in accommodating their writers, performers, readers, and audiences to multiple and shifting subject positions within the world they both constitute and inhabit."1 Necessary to this construction is the representation in these discourses of "ideology," the system of ideas, values, and beliefs common to any social group. "This vexed but indispensable term," Montrose continues, "has in its most general sense come to be associated with the processes by which social subjects are formed, re-formed and enabled to perform as conscious agents in an apparently meaningful world."2 In *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes*, the playwright represents in the title characters the ambiguities of Elizabethan chivalry in order
to show that in its most perfect form it requires strict allegiance to the monarch.³

Far from being obsolete, or recovered purely for nostalgia, chivalry during Elizabeth's reign was an ideology that retained enough of its feudal connotations to be employed as a means of consolidating power by both the monarchy and the aristocracy. Chivalry's tenets naturally required that its practitioners embody the virtues of courtesy, prowess, and charity; but what is more important for the monarch, chivalry promoted strict loyalty to one's liege, while for the aristocracy, chivalry guaranteed the privileges of knighthood, which included the notions of military adventurism and individual honor. As a consequence, the monarch's version of chivalry and that of the aristocracy were in constant conflict during the Elizabethan era, conflict repeatedly represented in its literature.⁴

In any study of Elizabethan chivalric literature, Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes occupies a strategic position as one of only three romantic plays surviving from the period of 1570 to 1585, the time of the establishment of permanent commercial theaters in London. The other two plays are Common Conditions and The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune. On the basis of what little evidence we have—the accounts of the Revels Office, entries in the Stationers' Register, and contemporary references—we can surmise that romances comprised approximately one-third of the plays produced during this period, indicating they were quite popular.⁵ Of these three surviving romances, only Clyomon concerns itself largely with matters of chivalry.

For modern historians of the theater, Clyomon also serves as a transition piece, containing in equal measures elements of the old morality play and foreshadowings of the more sophisticated drama yet to come. Like much medieval drama, Clyomon contains a vice, personifications, and clumsy fourteeners; like Renaissance drama, Clyomon evinces concern with realistic characterization and structure (both of which we will look at momentarily). The play also demands at least ten actors—an unusually large number for that time, especially if we take into account the practice of doubling.⁶ Rather than being regarded as a transition piece between medieval and Renaissance drama, Clyomon should be seen as a drama of its own time.

According to its title page, the play "hath bene sundry times Acted by her Majesties Players." Her Majesties Players, or the Queen's Men,
was an ensemble created in 1583, at Elizabeth's request, by her principal secretary, Sir Francis Walsingham. Composed of some of England's finest actors, the Queen's Men was the preeminent acting troupe in England for the first several years of its career. Because of the play's use of elements from the older morality drama, most critics assume that Clyomon was performed first by an earlier acting company before it came to the Queen's Men. Although this may be so, the number of players required by the script argues for a later dating. The large number of characters in fact demands a large acting company. In the 1570s, the average size of a company was five to seven players, while the Queen's Men had the unusually high number of twelve, enough to stage Clyomon.

Critics also point to the old-fashioned fourteeners and personifications as evidence for dating this play in the early 1570s. However, Robert Wilson's Three Ladies of London, written in 1581, also employed fourteeners and personifications such as Conscience, Fame, and Love. Attempting to date a play on the basis of such inadequate criteria is clearly unreliable. The Queen's Men in all likelihood premiered Clyomon.

That Clyomon was performed "sundry times" by the Queen's Men and that it was deemed worthy of being printed later (in 1599) suggests that Clyomon was quite popular, perhaps not just because it was an entertaining chivalric romance; it may also have investigated political issues important to the English people. Its political subtext may supply a clue to Clyomon's popularity and significance until now overlooked by most critics. I would suggest that it is no coincidence that the popularity of chivalric drama on the public stage corresponds to the popularity of the equally chivalric festivals for Elizabeth from the mid-1570s to the end of the century.

During the Renaissance, the court festival was an important means of representing both monarchial and aristocratic power. As critics such as Stephen Orgel, Roy Strong, and Sydney Anglo have demonstrated, the royal festival disseminated propaganda by representing in an idealized form the way the court wished itself to be understood by both its participants and its observers. Incorporating ritual and ceremony, the royal festival symbolically transformed the court into what it wished to become. Through dramatic analogy the monarch could show that she and her court embodied sanctity, virtue, and power. The dramatic context
created for many of Elizabeth’s festivals was one of chivalric romance, in which the Queen appeared as Astraea (or as some other idealized personage) and her knights protected her from all enemies, allegorical or otherwise. Thus, both sets of chivalric drama—the courtly and the professional—promoted an ethos of chivalry that demands, in part, complete loyalty of subject to monarch. This is exactly the theme of Clyomon.

David Bevington has shown that the structure of Clyomon follows the basic structure of the morality play: “The pattern of wandering, confusion, separation, and loss leads ultimately to rediscovery and reunion, a linear process not unlike the fall from grace leading to regeneration in the moral play.” Indeed, what most readers of the play have overlooked is that the two protagonists, Clyomon and Clamydes, must undergo trials before they can be considered true knights embodying the version of chivalry favored by the playwright. Specifically, the two protagonists must learn the chivalric virtue of faith, or loyalty.

The play introduces the theme of loyalty in a quick succession of four contrasting scenes. In the first scene, Clamydes has been rescued by Juliana, Princess of Denmark, from a great storm that threatened his passing ship. In order to win her hand (for they have naturally fallen in love), Clamydes must slay the flying serpent that feeds “his hungrie panch” with the women who live in her country. Clamydes accepts the task in language that reveals his chivalric values. Before he learns the nature of his quest, Clamydes says that Juliana

Did me permit with full consent, to land upon her shore:  
Upon true promise that I would, here faithfull still remaine,  
And that performe which she had vowed. . . .

(31–33)

After he learns that he must slay the serpent, he accepts the challenge, “Yea though the dangers should surpasse stout Hercules his toyle” (61), and adds:

And therefore Lady lincke with me, thy loyall heart for aye,  
For I am thine til fates untwine, of vital life the stay.

(65–66)
By saving the helpless Juliana from the flying serpent, Clamydes will win honor by proving his faithfulness to her.

Clamydes is thus introduced as a warrior who already possesses the chivalric virtues of a knight (although he is not technically a knight until he is dubbed in scene three). As a result, he contrasts directly with Clyomon, who is introduced in scene two as one who has yet to learn the virtues of faithfulness and loyalty. Instead, Clyomon seeks honor through martial deeds that serve no one but himself. For about twenty lines, Clyomon extols the glories of "martial exercises." In other words, Clyomon seeks after vainglory, a vice decried by, for example, Ramon Lull in *The Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry*, a thirteenth-century treatise on chivalry translated and published by William Caxton in 1485. This book exerted considerable influence upon Elizabethan discourses on chivalry. Lull writes:

> yf a squer have vayne glorye of that he doth / he is not worthy to be a knyght / For vayne glory is a vyce / whiche destroyeth & bryngeth to nought the merytes & guerdons of the benefyce of chyvalry.\(^\text{12}\)

In this play, Clyomon must learn to direct his deeds so that they serve others rather than himself.

The next two scenes confirm this reading of Clamydes and Clyomon. In scene three, Clamydes has returned home to be dubbed a knight so that he can slay the flying serpent (a rather thinly veiled plot device that allows the confrontation between the two protagonists to occur). As the scene begins, Clamydes's father, the King of Suavia, explains to his son "unto what end a knight is made" so that "honour thine may flow . . . to thy immortall fame" (228–29). The King then outlines the responsibilities of the knight, emphasizing loyalty and faithfulness:

> Know thou therefore, Clarymes deare, to have a knightly name Is first above all other things his God for to adore, In truth according to the lawes prescribde to him before. Secondly, that he be true unto his Lord and king. Thirdly, that he keepe his faith and troth in every thing. And then before all other things that else we can commend,
That he be alwaies ready prest, his countrey to defend:
The Widow, poore, and fatherlesse, or Innocent bearing blame,
To see their cause redressed right, a faithful knight must frame.

(231-39)

Accordingly, in slaying the flying serpent Clamydes will perform his chivalric duty by keeping his “faith and troth” to Juliana. Clyomon’s desire for vainglory, on the other hand, fails to fulfill the chivalric creed.

Critics have taken the fourth scene, in which Alexander the Great enters “as valiantly set forth as may be,” as an excuse for mere spectacle and pageantry. On the contrary, if we understand the play’s primary theme to be the promotion of the chivalric virtue of loyalty, then this scene performs a natural function in that argument. Alexander enters fresh from new conquests, sounding very much like Clyomon two scenes earlier:

After many invincible victories, and conquests great atched,
I Alexander with sound of Fame, in safetie am arrived
Upon my borders long wished for, of Macedonia soile,
And all the world subject have, through force of warlike toile.

(360-63)

Alexander, however, does not lust after vainglory. In medieval chivalric romance, Alexander the Great is typically portrayed as the pinnacle of knightly virtue. This play is no exception; it depicts Alexander as the “chief of chivalrie” (486). After thus recounting his numerous military victories, Alexander adds:

And yet Alexander, what art thou? thou art a mortall wight,
For all that ever thou hast got or wonne by force in fight.

(382-83)

Taking advantage of Alexander’s reflective mood, one of his lords reminds him of his chivalric duty to the gods, which, of course, recalls the King of Suavia’s exhortation to his son that a knight must “above all other things his God for to adore”:
Acknowledging thy state O King, to be as thou hast said,
The Gods no doubt as they have bene, will be thy sheeld and aid
In all attempts thou takst in hand, if case no glorie vaine
Thou seekest, but acknowledging thy victories and gaine,
Through the providence of sacred Gods to happen unto thee:
For vaine is trust, that in himselfe, man doth repose we see.

This lord reminds Alexander specifically to avoid seeking vainglory.
Alexander, thankful for this reminder, agrees to perform his sacred
duty to the gods and offer sacrifices of thankfulness at the temple of
Pallas Athena (402-11). By professing loyalty to the gods, Alexander
upholds the chivalric code as outlined by the King of Suavia and shows
exactly where Clyomon fails. Thus by juxtaposing these first four scenes,
the playwright of Clyomon represents the chivalric virtue of loyalty as
an ideal to be prized over mere vainglorious feats of arms.

This negative reading of Clyomon must be tempered, however. After
all, no one in the play accuses Clyomon of seeking vainglory. On the
contrary, Clyomon’s good reputation as a knight precedes him. The only
action for which Clyomon is criticized occurs in scene three when, just
before the King of Suavia dubs his son Clamydes a knight, Clyomon comes
forward and takes the dubbing instead. Clamydes thus stands “bereft
of honour,” and the King orders his men to pursue “that Traytor.” Even
so, Clyomon’s stealing of Clamydes’s knighthood is viewed with some
ambivalence because on the one hand the “honour cowardly was stolne
by Caitiffe he” (319) and on the other hand the theft “imports him for
to be, of valiant heart and mind” (307). This seeming contradiction
suggests the playwright’s own uncertainty about how to depict realistically
a character who, though initially flawed, soon changes for the better.

This apparent conflict in dramatic craftsmanship is further indicated
in the scene in which Neronis and Clyomon meet for the first time. Upon
discovering Clyomon lying upon the shore after his shipwreck, Neronis
exclaims to her companions:

Of truth my Lords, his countenance bewrayes him for to bee,
In health, of valiant heart and mind, and eke of hye degree.

(799-800)
Thus in standard physiognomic tradition, even his appearance proclaims Clyomon to be a virtuous knight. Yet the important words here are "in health," because until this moment, Clyomon has practiced an unhealthy version of chivalry—one promoting vainglory.

This scene mirrors the opening scene of the play in which Clamydes pledges his faithfulness to Juliana after she saves him from a sea storm. It also marks the turning point in the play as far as the chivalric progress of Clyomon is concerned. As scene eight opens, Clyomon, like Clamydes before him, has survived a terrible tempest: "Ah set me to shore sirs," he begs the mariners, "in what countrey so ever we bee" (721). "Truly Gentleman," the Boatswain observes, "we were never in the like tempests before" (727). It is then, as Clyomon lies on the shore bemoaning his fate, that Neronis, "daughter to Patranius, King of the strange Marshes," discovers him.

A man surviving a tempest is a common motif in English Renaissance literature, particularly in romance, chivalric or otherwise. Life is frequently represented as a sea voyage beset by occasional storms. The life wisely led brings one safely into port; the life led unwisely does not. Writing about Shakespeare’s romances, Northrop Frye argues that "the images of chaos, tempest, illusion, madness, darkness, death, belong to the middle action of the comedy, in the phase of confused identity. It is at this point, the low point of the hero’s or heroine’s fortunes, as a rule, that the comic dialectic is formed." This comic dialectic occurs when "the renewing power of the final action lifts us into a higher world, and separates that world from the world of the comic action itself." In Shakespeare’s plays this device of spiritual travail and rebirth symbolized by a tempest works most notably in _Twelfth Night_, _Pericles_, and _The Tempest_; it also works in _Clyomon_. The higher world to which Clyomon and Clamydes are lifted is the world of chivalry. After Neronis discovers the weakened Clyomon, she promises to nurse him back to health. Clyomon responds:

O Princes, if I ever be to health restord againe,
Your faithfull servant day and night, I vow here to remaine.

(820–21)

Clyomon has left the world of vainglorious martial action and entered the world of true chivalry.
It is politically significant that in the scene which introduces Clyomon and portrays him as a knight for whom “onely upon feates of armes, is all my delight” (160), Clyomon sends Subtle Shift, the vice, to the court of Suavia, “because I would heare / If any shewes or triumphs be towards, else would I not come there” (158–59). Clyomon prefers “shewes or triumphs” as a means to win honor and fame: “For nothing doth delight me more, then to heare of martiall play” (167). The use of the word play is highly suggestive because it is almost certainly used in this sense as defined in the Oxford English Dictionary: “Exercise or action by way of recreation; amusement, diversion, sport, frolic. (In early use sometimes in bad sense: Vicious or profligate indulgence, revelling.)” If Clyomon’s participation in “shewes or triumphs” is meant to be understood as frivolous indulgence, then, by extension, the “shewes or triumphs” at Elizabeth’s court could also attract vainglorious men, at least according to this playwright. The Accession Day tilts celebrating Elizabeth’s birthday began at least as early as the mid-1570s, which would make the earliest of them contemporaneous with Clyomon. Although representing the Queen’s own propaganda, many of these Elizabethan festivals were frequently used for the promotion of self-interests by their aristocratic participants.17 It is therefore likely that many viewed these tournaments as politically dangerous, celebrating the knight rather than the Queen. Unless their martial exercises served the Queen, they were examples of vainglory.

Significantly, Clyomon, like Clamydes, learns the virtue of loyalty through serving a woman. In Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare’s Genres, Leonard Tennenhouse argues that Elizabethan romance is frequently concerned with the problematics of monarchial succession through a female. This was, after all, a leading question of Elizabeth’s reign: whom would she marry in order to beget an heir; or, when it became clear that she would not marry, who would succeed her to the throne? In discussing Sidney’s Arcadia, Tennenhouse suggests:

This problem is a peculiarly English dilemma. That is to say, the fact of the king’s having only daughters for heirs represents a clear threat to the continuity of power: the oracle hints at the possibility that one daughter will be stolen and the other will make an unsuitable match. Both these possibilities call the
patrilineal distribution of power into question. This suggests that once embodied in the female, power can be transferred to an outsider, a foreign line perhaps, or a family not of aristocratic lineage at all.

I do not wish to argue that the issues of the Arcadia are the same as those of Clyomon; the play is not primarily about the succession of power, although it is an issue in one of the subplots. Yet both Clamydes and Clyomon do discover the chivalric virtue of loyalty as a result of serving some very powerful women. In the first scene of the play, Juliana informs Clamydes that after he slays the flying serpent

Then shalt thou of all women win, the heart and great good will,  
And me possess for spousèd wife, who in election am  
To have the Crowne of Denmarke here, as heire unto the same:  
For why, no other children hath my sire besides mee, but one other,  
And he indeed is heire before, for that he is my brother.

Almost as an afterthought, Juliana tells Clamydes that she has a brother: the effect is that she is heir to the throne and that Clamydes is her knight.

Neronis, unlike Juliana, is not heir to a throne, but her mother is. In the middle of the play, Neronis is kidnapped by Thrasellus, the King of Norway. Weakened by the loss of his daughter, Patraunius dies, leaving his pregnant wife to rule. She is challenged in her rule by her brother-in-law, Mustantius, who “from her the Crowne would take” (1205). Both Mustantius and the Queene allow Alexander to decide who will rule the Isle of Strange Marshes. He, in turn, declares that the issue will be determined by a trial by combat, with one knight representing Mustantius, and the other the Queene. As it happens, Clamydes volunteers to fight for Mustantius and Clyomon for the Queene. This episode is the climax of the play, serving to reunite Clyomon and Clamydes in addition to resolving the story of the Queene of Strange Marshes. In this bout, Clyomon no longer fights for vainglory, but for a queen whose circumstances resemble, but do not mirror, Queen Elizabeth’s. While we should not try to equate the Queene of the Isle of Strange Marshes with
Queen Elizabeth of England—their two situations are quite different—the playwright does represent a female in a position of power, and the matter of who should succeed to the throne is debated. In addition, this episode has been altered from its corresponding episode in the romance of Perceforest, the source for Clyomon, in order to have a pregnant woman as one of the claimants to the throne. To understand fully the political statement the playwright seems to be making and how this relates to the subject of chivalry, we should reacquaint ourselves with the political situation of England in the late 1570s and early 1580s.

At the time this play was first performed, the question of who would succeed Queen Elizabeth to the throne was of the utmost political concern. In the late 1570s and early 1580s, Elizabeth was being courted by the Duke of Alençon, the brother of the King of France. Arrangements for a marriage appeared so close to being finalized that many of Elizabeth’s countrymen protested vehemently. For example, John Stubbs, a Puritan zealot, had his right hand cut off for writing The discovery of a gaping Gulf wherein England is to be swallowed by another french marriage . . . (1579), in which he warns of the dangers that will occur if Elizabeth turns her country over to the rule of a foreigner. Or, to cite another example, Sir Philip Sidney’s famous letter written in 1580 also implores the Queen not to marry the French Duke. Finally, Elizabeth’s entertainment at Whitehall in 1581, The Four Foster Children of Desire, allegorizes the French suit for Elizabeth, depicting the presumptive attempt of the four foster children (one of whom was Sidney) to storm the Fortress of Perfect Beauty (from which Elizabeth watched the festivities). The French ambassadors were in fact present in the audience for this entertainment. The children fail in their attempt, as did the French in theirs, but not until 1584 when the Duke of Alençon died. In the meantime, the subject of an impending royal marriage continued to dominate both political and social forums.

In Clyomon, the Queene of Strange Marshes is pregnant. Elizabeth, of course, was not, although there was much concern over whether or not she could beget an heir. In January of 1579, ambassadors representing the Duke of Alençon arrived in England, and, soon after, physicians examined Elizabeth to see if she could bear children. In a letter dated 15 January 1579, the Spanish ambassador Bernardino de Mendoza reported to his King that “a few days previously, [the Queen] had a consultation
of doctors to decide whether she could hope for progeny.' The doctors, he writes, "found no difficulty." 19 Elizabeth was already forty-five.

Sir William Cecil, Elizabeth's principal minister, was also optimistic about the Queen's ability to bear children and recognized the national importance of her doing so. Writing on 2 October 1579, Cecil outlined the dangers of a marriage between the Queen and Alençon. Second on Cecil's list of dangers is his view on the succession question:

The good and natural! Subjects, which of a long Tyme have desyred hir Majesty's Mariadg, both for Love of her own Person, and to have hir Lyne contynued by a Child of hir own, and also to avoid the Perrills that must nedes follow with the Quarrell for the Crown, will gretly be miscontented, and depely grieved, as they may in ther Harts, as though hir Majesty had no Care over them, but only to provyde for hiself, and to leave them all and ther Posteritye that shall overlive hir Majesty, to the Mercy of the bloody Heyres. 20

Clearly the English wanted Elizabeth married and pregnant. They wanted no turmoil surrounding the succession like that which occurred when Mary Tudor came to the throne, or which persistently threatened while Mary, Queen of Scots was alive. If the situation of the Queene of Strange Marshes approximates Elizabeth's, then the fact of her pregnancy represents wish fulfillment at the least and veiled advice at the most. Her pregnancy serves no other purpose, and in fact complicates the plot when the succession question could have more easily revolved around the Queen herself or Neronis, rather than around an unborn child.

Further support for this political reading of the Queene of the Isle of Strange Marshes comes from an unexpected quarter—the vice Subtle Shift. Until the episode under discussion, Shift acts as a counterpoint to the theme of loyalty. Throughout the play he has been consistently unloyal, serving, he says, only himself. Serving in succession Clyomon, Clamydes, Bryan sance foi, 21 and finally Clamydes again, Shift has acted as foil to the chivalric virtue of loyalty as exemplified in the play's protagonists—until, that is, the episode with the Queene of Strange Marshes. When Alexander declares that the matter of succession will be decided by trial by combat, no one immediately comes forward
to represent the Queene. (Clyomon is still far away and has only just learned of the Queene’s trouble.) Mustantius thus declares to Alexander:

And having not her Champion here, according to decree,
There resteth nought for her to loose, the Crowne belongs to mee.

(1722–23)

But Subtle Shift, in a remarkable moment in the play, comes forward and says:

Nay ant shall please your grace, rather then she shall it lose,
I my selfe will be her Champion for halfe a doozen blowes.

(1724–25)

His bravery does not last long, however: faced with the immediate prospect of battling his master Clamydes, Shift declines, saying, “Nay soft, of sufferance commeth ease, though I cannot rule my tongue, ile rule my hands” (1727).

The fact that Shift volunteers himself when no one else will do so is noteworthy nonetheless because the vice figure of medieval and Renaissance drama, in addition to his many trouble-making functions, frequently serves as the voice of the populace. As Robert Weimann argues, “In the midst of increasingly illusionary scenery and localized settings, the fool and his descendants [like the fool of ancient Greek plays] continue to break through the ‘fourth wall’ . . . , and again conjure and renew the old audience contact.”22 Speaking of the clown figure’s frequent use of direct address to the audience and of his anachronistic language, Weimann writes that “the postritual element of nonrepresentational self-expression became associated (as long as it persisted in a secular context) with the actor’s awareness of his social identity and function and served as a link between the experience of the real world and the theatrical and idealistic illusions of the play world.”23 “In this way,” he continues,
social position that rejects the assumptions of the mythical or heroic theme in favor of the common sense attitude of a plebeian or secularized audience.\textsuperscript{24}

Thus, the vice figure of medieval and Renaissance drama—here, Subtle Shift—frequently speaks with the voice of the common man. Considering the play retrospectively then, we can see that the faithlessness of Shift highlights the faithfulness (or faithlessness) of the protagonists; but even more, Shift's action criticizes the unnecessary violence that accompanies the knight. Whenever violence threatens, Shift asserts that he will be on his way. When he first learns that Clyomon is a knight, he avers, "If I had knowne so much before, serve that serve will, / I would have serv'd no martiall Knight" (161–62). When Clyomon and Clamydes meet and threaten to fight: "Nay then God be with you, if you be at that poynt I am gone. / If you be of the fighters disposition, ile leave you alone" (471–72). He identifies himself to \textit{Bryan sance foi} as "even the cowardlyest villaine ant shall please you that lives under the sun" (591). All the more noteworthy is it, then, that this surrogate for the people is willing to fight like a loyal knight for the Queene of Strange Marshes, a dramatic reminder of England’s Queen.\textsuperscript{25}

As it turns out, neither Shift nor Clyomon fights to defend the Queene's right to rule. Before Clyomon enters, Mustantius and the Queene agree to forego the trial by combat and let Alexander decide the matter. In a decision equally relevant politically, Alexander decides that Mustantius and the Queene will rule jointly until the Queene's child is born and wears the crown. Even after Clyomon enters, declaring that he is ready to fight, he is told that the matter has already been decided. Negotiation thus replaces the ritual of trial by combat.\textsuperscript{26}

As we can see, \textit{Clyomon} is hardly a play without topical significance. Contemporary with the frequently political court festival, \textit{Clyomon} actively supports the propaganda that represents Elizabeth as queen over her loyal knights. It criticizes military adventurism that glorifies the knight rather than the queen, and it suggests that the common man, as well as the knight, is chivalrous enough to fight for his Queen.

It is unfortunate more plays do not survive from the critical early period of 1570 to 1585, so that they, too, could be examined, not as awkward plays that look forward to more sophisticated drama, but as
cultural texts that can tell us much about the age. *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes*, long ignored as an old-fashioned, immature play, may be seen, instead, as a drama that debates issues of contemporary importance through the guise of chivalry.

**NOTES**


6. Although they divide the parts differently, both David M. Bevington, *From "Mankind" to Marlowe: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 196, and Littleton in *Clyomon and Clamydes*, 36, deduce that the play can be performed by seven men and three boys.


9. Many critics make the mistake of reading the play with modern sensibilities; to them the play is awkwardly old fashioned. Eugene M. Waith, *Ideas of Greatness: Heroic Drama in England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), for example, calls the play “ludicrous” (37) and “foolish” (42); Norman Sanders et al., eds., *The Revels History of Drama in English: 1500-1576* (New York: Methuen, 1980), write that “the heroes vie with each other not only in heroism but also in absurdity” (2:209). Most other critics restrict their comments to the play’s structure, vice figure, and fourteeners. See, for example, Madeleine Doran, *Endeavors of Art: A Study of Form in Elizabethan Drama* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1954), 299-300; Bevington, *Popular Drama of Tudor England*, 194-96; and F. P. Wilson, *The English Drama: 1485-1585*, ed. G. K. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 209-10. Littleton’s critical edition of the play begins to right the wrongs this overlooked play has suffered, although she, too, concludes her introduction by observing: “Enough has been said of the style and content of *Clyomon and Clamydes* to indicate that its significance is extrinsic rather than intrinsic. It is a significance that consists of its literary relationships and, more specifically, its place in the poetic and structural development of English drama from craft to art” (*Clyomon and Clamydes*, 63).

A dissenting voice can be found in Scott McMillin’s essay on the Queen’s Men. McMillin argues that the troupe enjoyed a special status as Elizabeth’s own and that it was the “category of English patriotism and culture to which the Queen’s Men were devoted. The politics of their origin run through their entire repertory, as far as we can see from the extant plays” (15).


13. For example, Littleton in *Clyomon and Clamydes*, 164.


15. Frye, *Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance*, 133.

16. Using the terminology of New Historicism, we might describe both Clyomon’s and Clamydes’ conversions as their being "fashioned"—not, in this case, "self-fashioned"—in terms of the rejection of a politically abhorrent Other: the practice of a chivalry that legitimizes aggression and self-promotion over a chivalry requiring loyalty to one’s monarch (see Greenblatt’s methodology of self-fashioning in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 8–9).


21. Even Bryan sance foi’s name points out the theme of loyalty in this play: ‘‘Brian without faith.’’


24. Ibid., 13–14.

25. Richard Tarlton, the most popular member of the Queen’s Men, would most likely have portrayed the character Subtle Shift. We do not know if *Clyomon and Clamydes* was ever performed at court. We do know, however, that the Queen’s Men performed regularly before Queen Elizabeth and that, according to Thomas Heywood in his *An Apology for Actors* (New York: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1941), Tarlton was a great favorite with the Queen as well as with the public (E2v). For more on Tarlton and his importance to the clown and vice traditions in Elizabethan drama, see Weimann,
26. Assuming that Clamydes is supposed to practice the (correct) virtues of chivalry, his fighting for Mustantius appears to be a problem with the politics of this play. However, the playwright is merely following his source *Perceforest*. Littleton writes, "The playwright follows this episode closely, arranging however that the knight[s] meet for a trial by combat in Macedon (rather than at the Pine of Marvels) and changing the dispute over the crown from the land of Borras to the Ile of Strange Marshes" (*Clyomon and Clamydes*, 42). In other words, matters of storytelling here take precedence over matters of politics.