Oh, for Shame: Public Perception and Punishment in Chrétien's Cligès

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Medieval French romances suggest that society placed honor and shame to keep every individual in his or her proper position between men and women. Society expected women to live up to an established, just as it did knights, and failure to uphold these expectations led to public humiliation. Chrétien de Troyes's Cligès model illustrates not only this culture of honor and shame but also that women to higher standards and punished them more severely than men for failing to meet those standards. Placing them under a greater degree of public scrutiny, men and women alike could face opprobrium. The actions and reactions of character reveal their understanding of this division between the private, female sphere and the public, male sphere. The actions and reactions of the Cligès characters illustrate the public perception during the time and the difficulty that both men and women might encounter after facing shame and the importance of attempting to avoid it.

To develop this argument, a basic understanding of the social constructs and conventions is necessary in order to outline the parameters of the culture. Larry D. Benson focuses on the involved role of women in society about which Chrétien writes. According to Benson, the Clarisse romance is important activity, and a plausible image of the noblewoman needed to determine a knight's parameters and illustrate a culture of honor and, at times, experienced shame. In tournaments, men fought for their country and brought honor to those they represented. Fighting tournaments largely determine the worth of a knight, in order to maintain the friendly atmosphere that characterized a knight's honor and loyalty and bring honor and booty to those they represented. The actions and reactions of the Cligès characters illustrate the importance of fighting for King Arthur.

Despite his father's sadness, Alexander insists on proving himself worthy of being a knight by fighting for King Arthur. Alexander

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