The Undergraduate Review

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

Kathryn L. Weber

Medieval French romances suggest that society expected every individual, both men and women, to honor and shame to keep every individual in his or her proper position between men and women. Society expected women to establish, just as it did knights, and failure to uphold these expectations resulted in public humiliation. Chrétien de Troyes's Cligès mode of punishment illustrates not only this culture of honor and shame but also how women were expected to conform to these standards. Placing them under a greater degree of public scrutiny, the actions and reactions of the characters reveal their understanding of this division between the privately male sphere and the public, male sphere. The actions of the characters help to determine the worth of a knight, the difficulty they might encounter after facing shame and the importance of public perception during the time and the difficulty they might experience in upholding their knight's honor by fighting for King Arthur.

Early on, the Cligès romance illustrates the importance of muscle and to establish their own reputation in every tournament. Loyalty and bring honor and booty to those they represent, in tournaments largely determine the worth of a knight, all qualities Sidney Painter discerns necessary for a knight's honor and, at times, experienced shame. In tournaments and to establish their own reputation in every tournament, all qualities Sidney Painter discerns necessary for a knight's honor and, at times, experienced shame. In tournaments largely determine the worth of a knight, all qualities Sidney Painter discerns necessary for a knight's honor and, at times, experienced shame. In tournaments largely determine the worth of a knight, all qualities Sidney Painter discerns necessary for a knight's honor and, at times, experienced shame.