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The Fifteenth-Century Illustrations of Christine De Pizan's 'The Book of the City of Ladies' and 'The Treasure of the City of Ladies': Analyzing the Relation of the Pictures to the Text

Laura Rinaldi Dufresne

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This is the first book to do a detailed study of the illustrations in two important fifteenth century novels. Christine de Pizan was one of the few authors of late medieval France involved with all aspects of her manuscripts' production. Her work has received enormous scholarly attention as their subject is nothing less than the history and education of women. This book fills a gap in the scholarship by shifting the attention from their literary content to the imagery chosen to illustrate these two pioneering books on women and their worth. This new focus includes artists of Christine's own choosing to those illustrating "The City" and "The Treasure" after her death throughout the peak of the two works' popularity. The social context and iconographic content of the miniatures accompanying these texts provides a broad, often diverse view of the role and image of the fifteenth century woman. In "The City", the illustrations often focus on intellectual discussion rather than heroic action of women. In "The Treasure", typically the pictures show scenes of stately lectures and well-dressed students, usually nobility, crowded into classroom settings, which illuminates the advances in education for women at that time.

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