



Judith Leyster, Self-Portrait, 1633

AHST 2331-001 (21655)

Understanding Art

Dr. Charissa N. Terranova

Spring 2024

Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30-12:45 pm

GR 2.530

Office Hours: By appointment  
Contact: [terranova@utdallas.edu](mailto:terranova@utdallas.edu)

Teaching Assistants:

Maureen Okwulogu: [maureen.okwulgo@utdallas.edu](mailto:maureen.okwulgo@utdallas.edu)

Brenda Vega-Mora: [brenda.vegamora@utdallas.edu](mailto:brenda.vegamora@utdallas.edu)

Research Assistant:

Sofia Penny: [sofia.penny@utdallas.edu](mailto:sofia.penny@utdallas.edu)

01/30/24

Women in the Art of the Western Medieval World



Barbara Kruger, Untitled, 1997

- Byzantine Empire
- Western Europe from the Carolingian era to later Middle Ages
- Women working in scriptoria
- Women writers
- Opus Anglicanum in England

# Division Of The Roman Empire By The Emperor Theodosios

Pars occidentalis

395 A.D.

Pars orientis

Western Roman Empire

Rome

Constantinople

Eastern Roman Empire  
(Byzantine Empire)

- Provincia
- Diocesis
- Provincia proconsularis

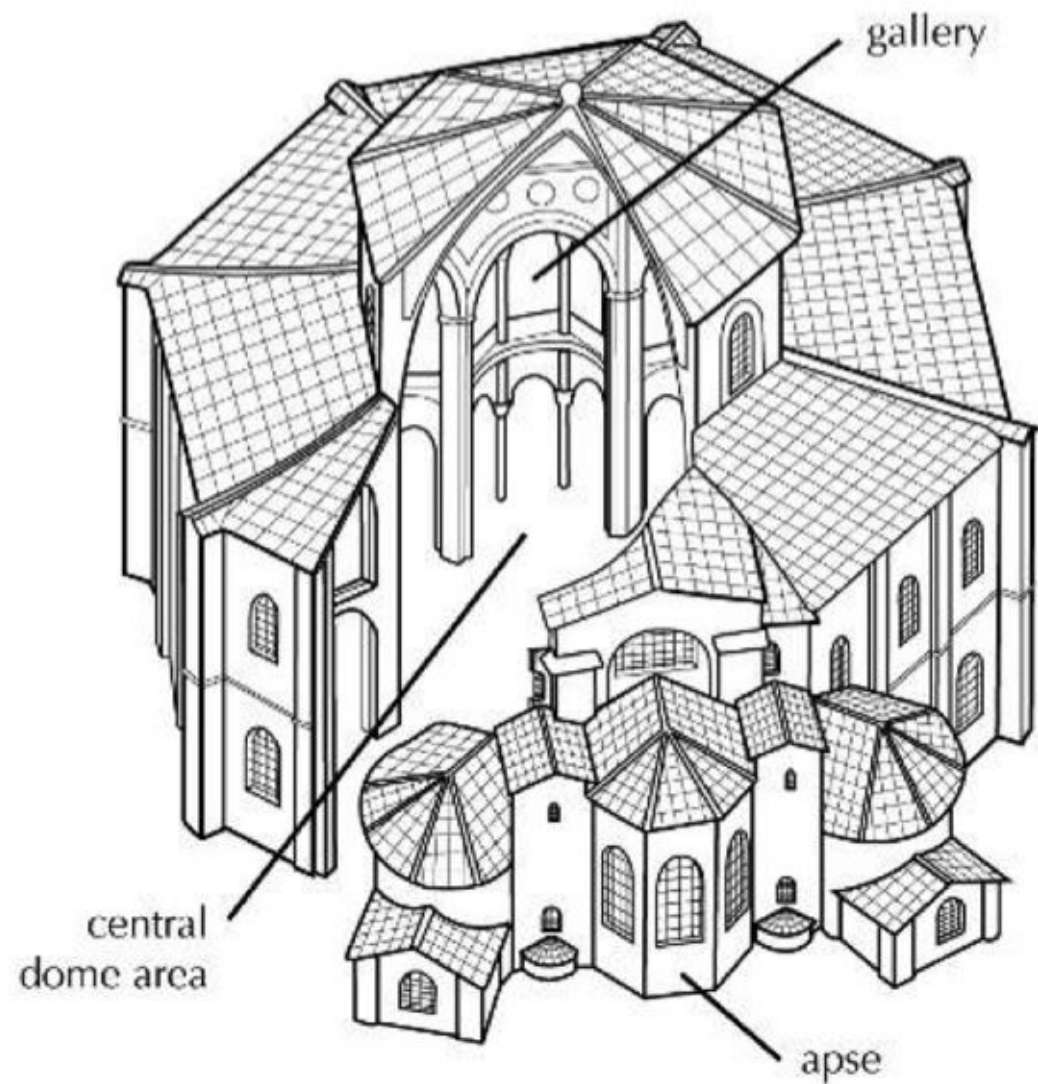
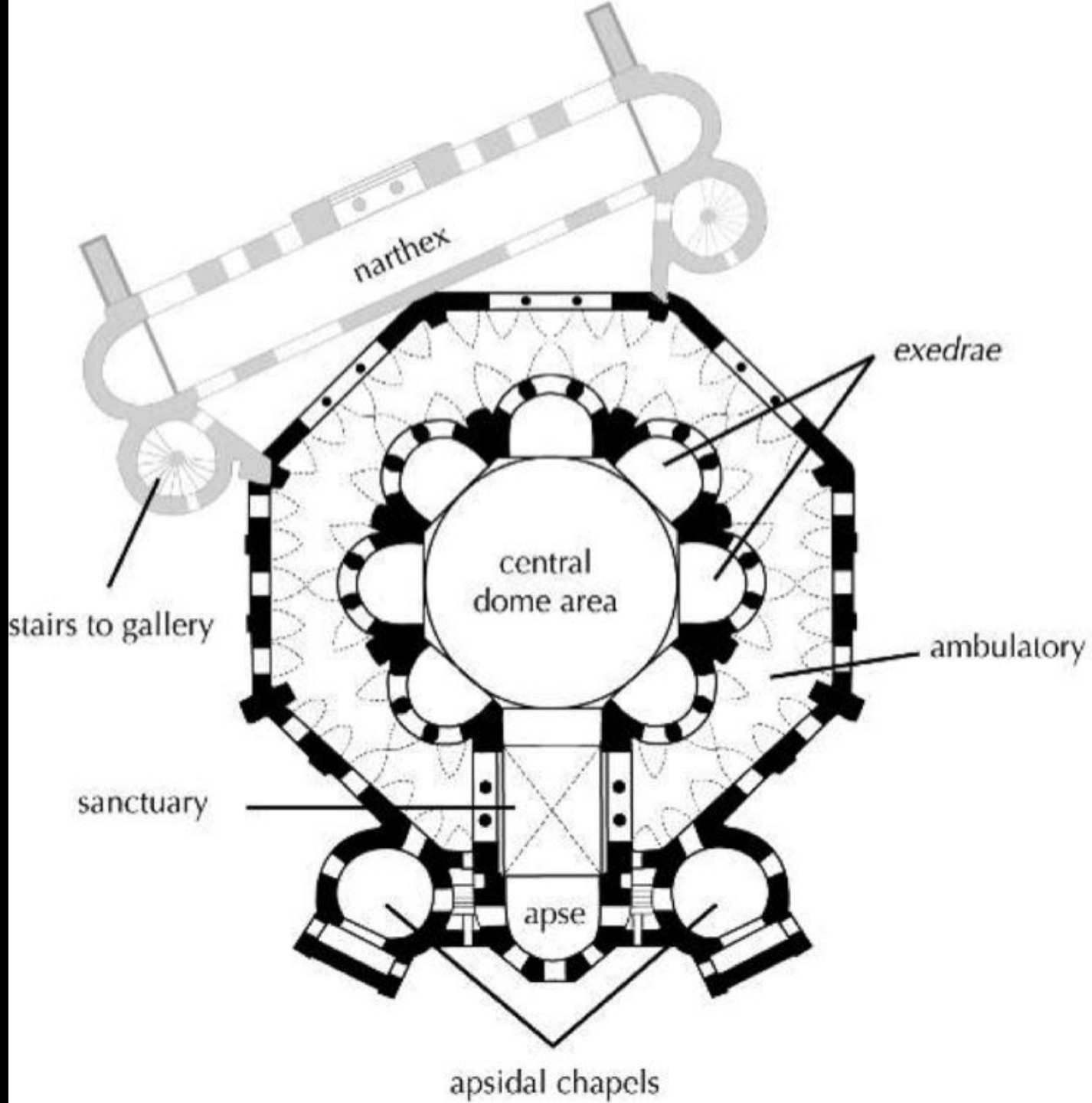
PARTITIO IMPERII  
AD 395

## THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE



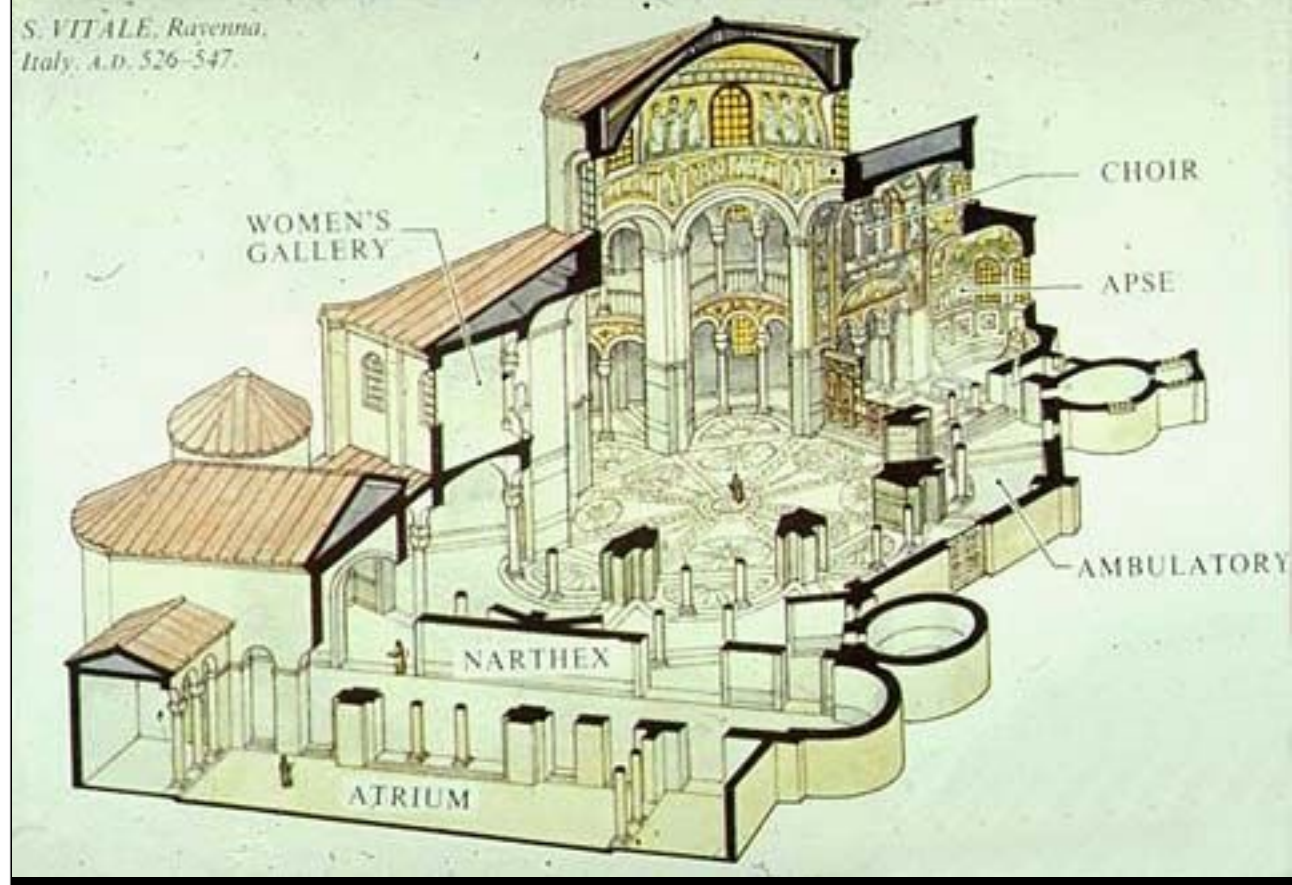
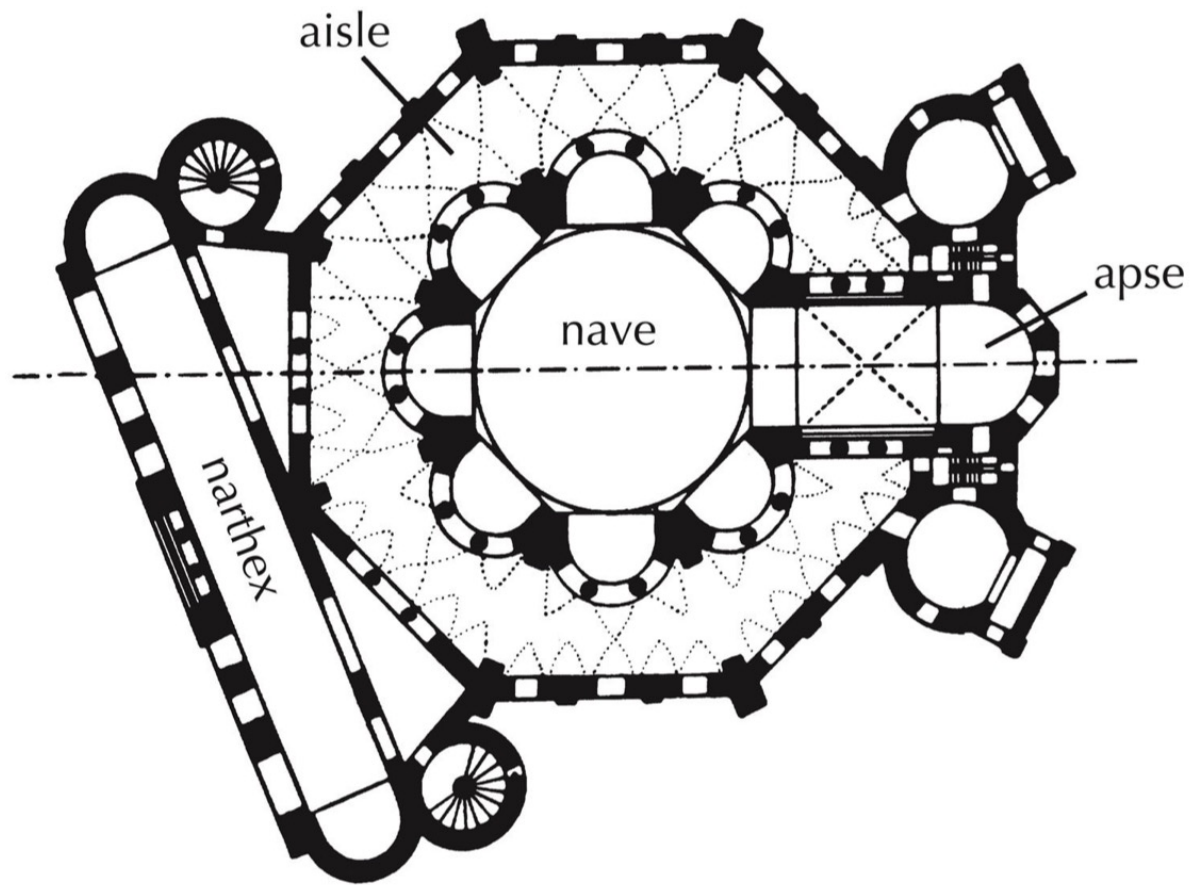


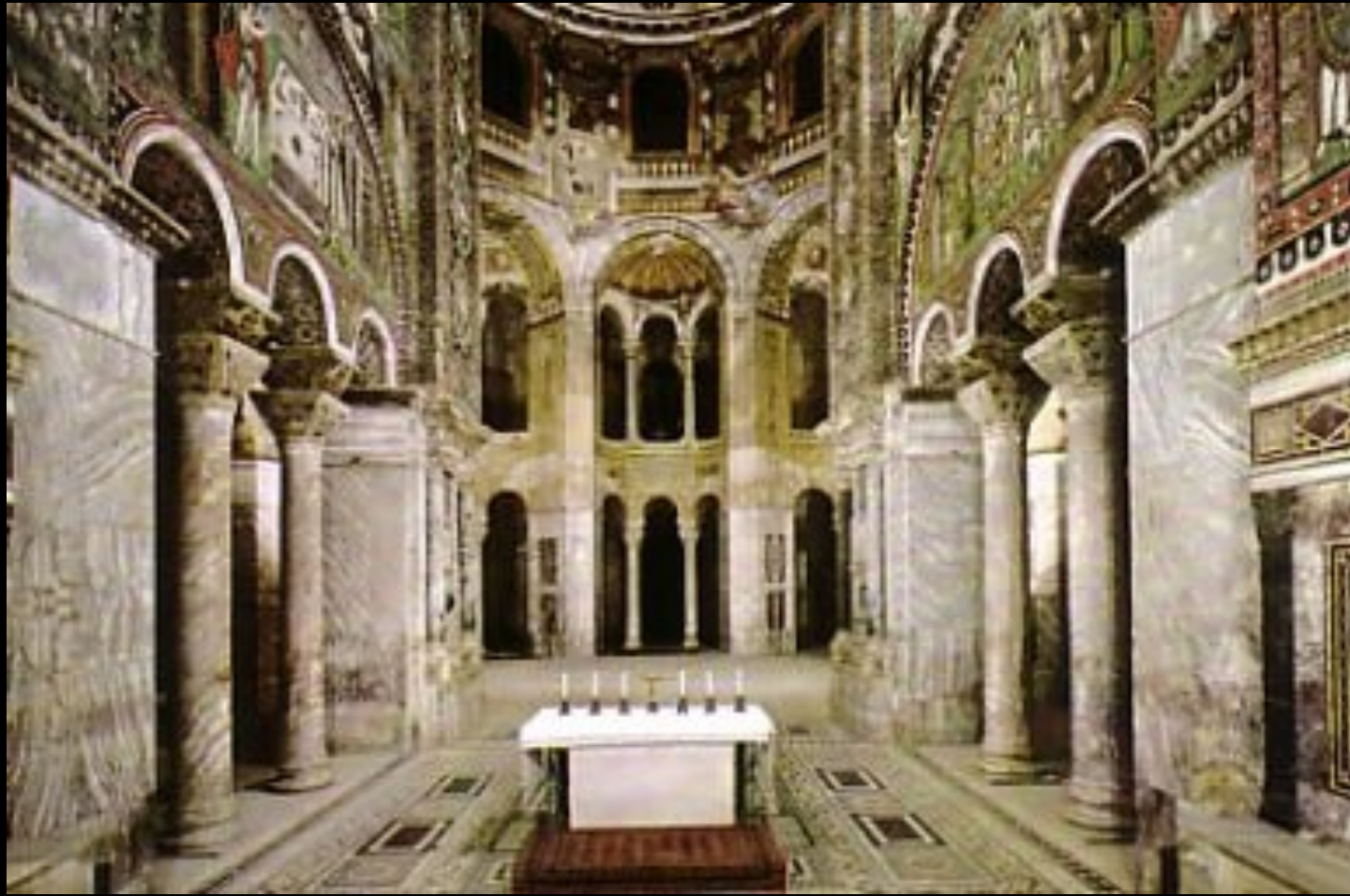
Basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna, 547





Flying Buttresses







“byzantine”

- 1.) relating to Byzantium (now Istanbul), the Byzantine Empire, or the Eastern Orthodox Church.
2. (of a system or situation) excessively complicated, and typically involving a great deal of administrative detail.

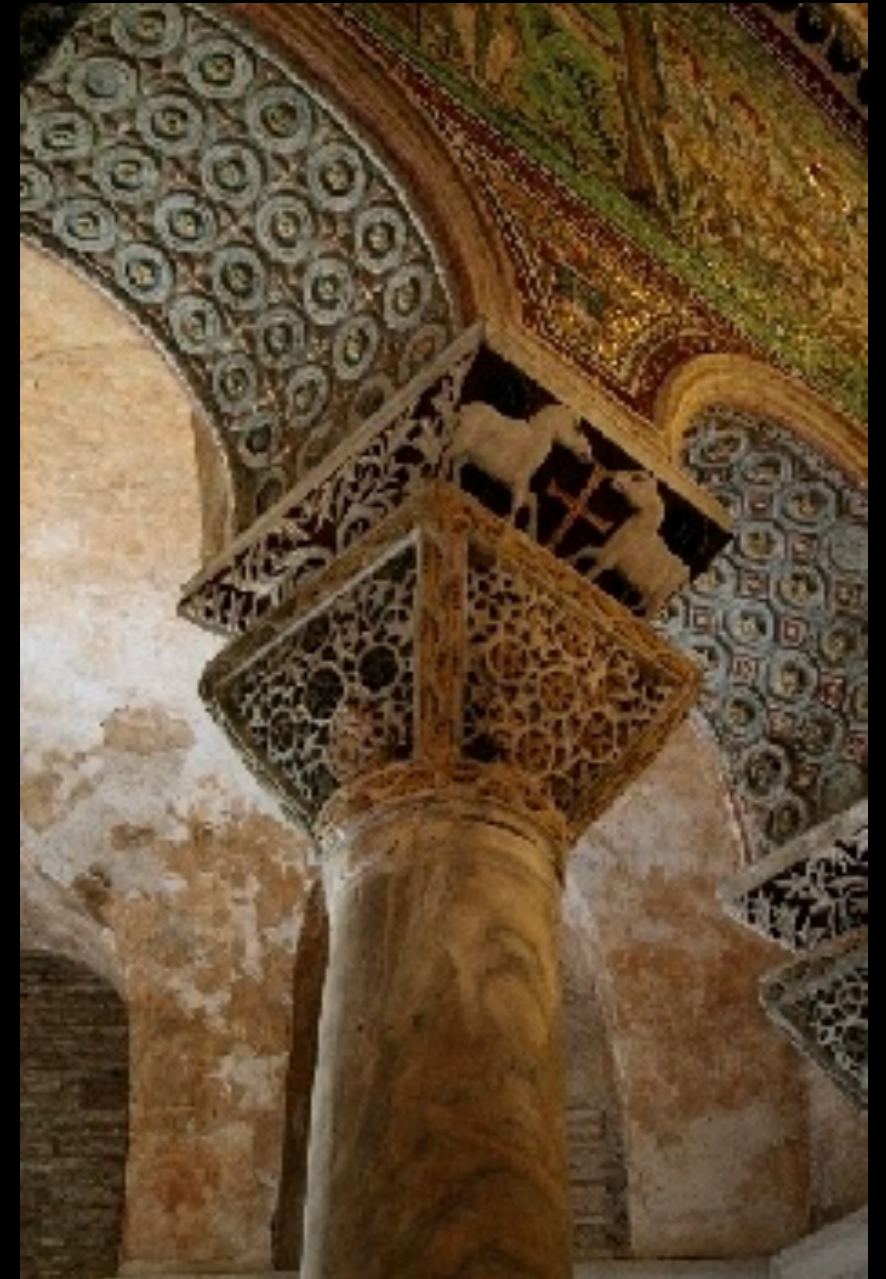




Figure 3.1 Mosaic of Empress Theodora, San Vitale, Ravenna, ca. 547



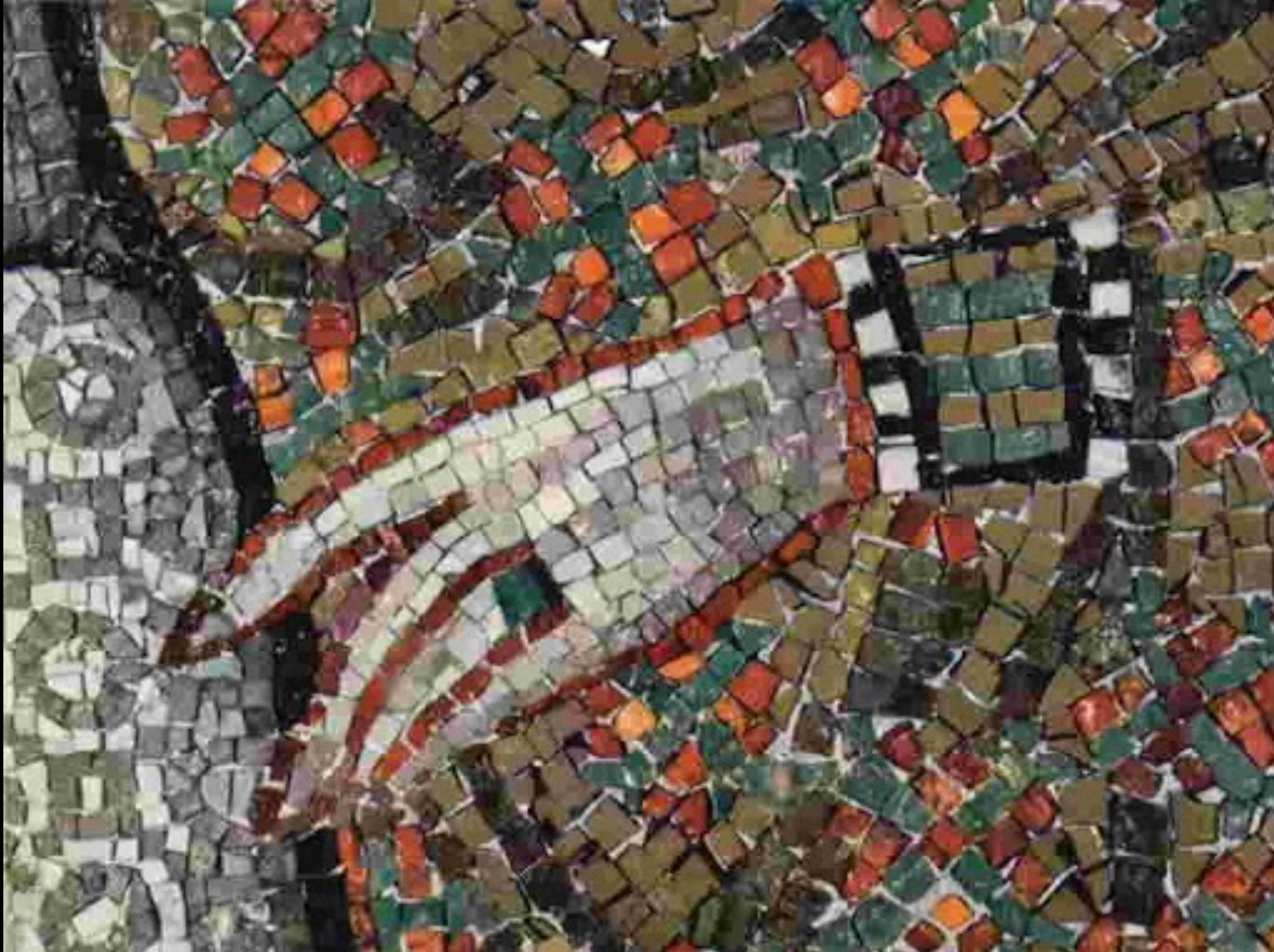
Theodora

What were some of the legal transformations under the reign of Justinian and Theodora?

Monophysitism



Figure 3.1 Details of Mosaic of Empress Theodora, San Vitale, Ravenna, ca. 547



Tesserae



Photo by Abbie Weinberg

164-529q

THE  
**Secret History**  
OF THE  
C O U R T  
Of the Emperor  
**JUSTINIAN:**

WRITTEN  
By *PROCOPIUS* of *Cesarea* ;  
Faithfully rendred into *Englisb.*

L O N D O N :  
Printed for *John Barksdale* Bookbinder,  
over against the Five Bells in *New-*  
*street*, between *Fetterlane*  
and *Shooelane*. 1674.

Procopius, The Secret History of the Court of the Emperor Justinian, written 550 or 558, or maybe even as late as 562; discovered in the Vatican library and published in 1623

Procopius on Justinian mosaic, Basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna, 527-457 CE



Fig. 3.2 Dormition, Birth of the Virgin, Daphni , ca 1000 A mosaic from the monastery, depicting the bathing of new-born Virgin Mary.

- The Midwife

## Monastery at Daphni

This is an eleventh-century Byzantine monastery northwest of central Athens, Greece in the suburb of Chaidari







Fig. 3.2 Dormition, Birth of the Virgin, Daphni , ca 1000 A mosaic from the monastery, depicting the bathing of new-born Virgin Mary.



Ancient Roman relief carvings of a midwife attending a woman giving birth, 2nd century CE, Wellcome Collection





Fig. 3.2 Dormition, Birth of the Virgin, Daphni , ca 1000 A mosaic from the monastery, depicting the bathing of new-born Virgin Mary.

What according to Wendy Slatkin were some of the other privileges of midwives during the Middle Ages?

# Visual Culture of Convents

- Carolingian Era
- Hildegard of Bingen
- The Poor Clares of Italy
- Nuns in Northern Europe
  - Mysticism
  - Manuscript illustration
  - Scriptoria

- The term “Carolingian” refers to the Frankish dynasty, founded by Charlemagne's father (Pepin III), that ruled in western Europe from 750 to 987.
- Charlemagne (742-814), or Charles the Great, was king of the Franks, 768-814, and emperor of the West, 800-814. He founded the Holy Roman Empire, stimulated European economic and political life, and fostered the cultural revival known as the Carolingian Renaissance.



- How did nunneries or convents function during the Middle Ages?
- What was their role in cultural life?
- What is manuscript illumination?
- What is a convent scriptoria?



---

Fig. 3.3 Hildegard von Bingen, an Illumination from Scivias (Know the Ways), ca. 1150-1179

- Mysticism
- Manuscript illumination
- Scriptoria
- Abesses

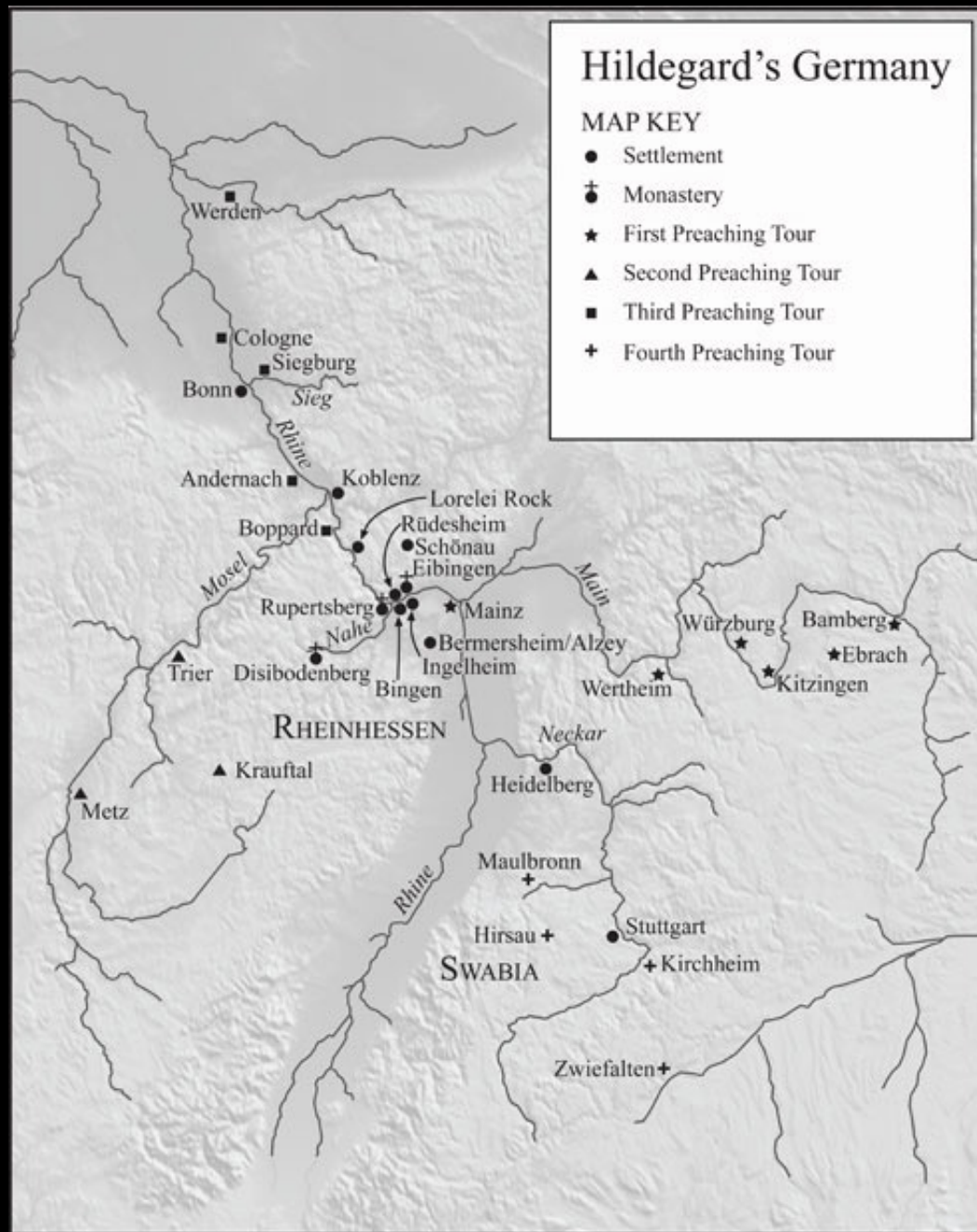
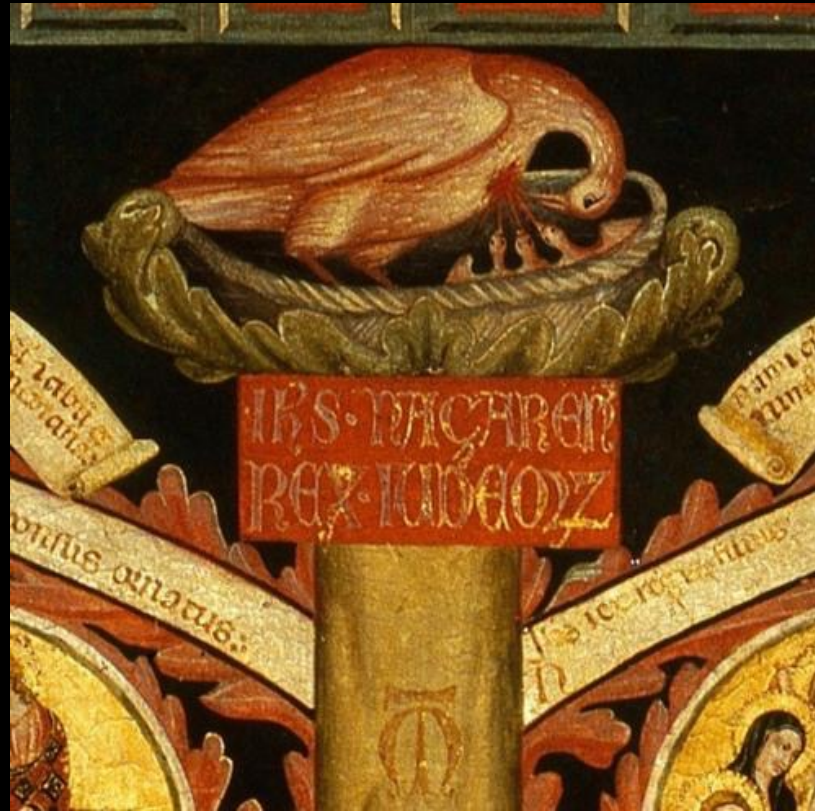
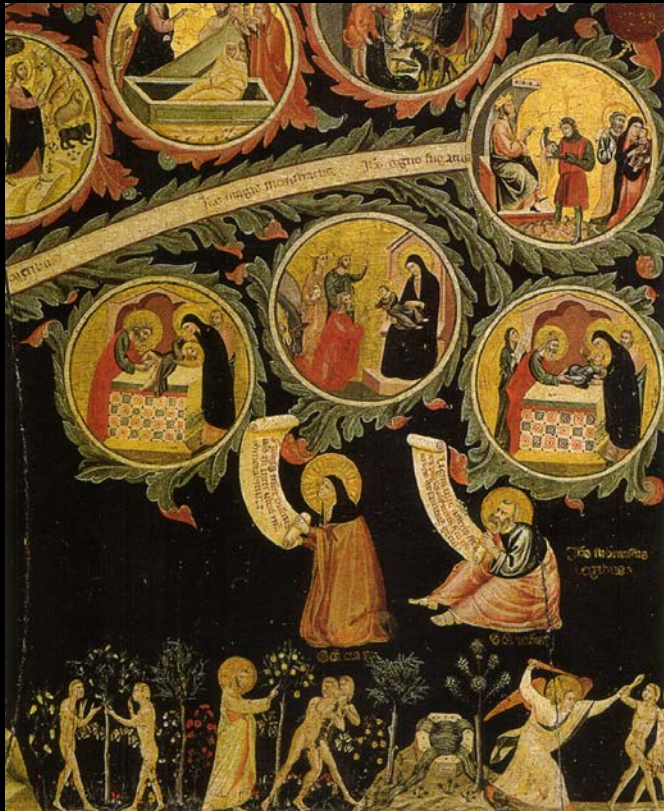


Fig. 3.3 Hildegard von Bingen, an Illumination from Scivias, ca. 1150-117



Fig. 3.4 Pacino di Bonaguida, Tree of Life, ca. 1310-1315

- The Poor Clares of Italy
- Claustration
- Eucharist



# Women in Representations

- The Compassio of Mary

Fig. 3.5 Giovanni Pisano, Pistoia pulpit, Crucifixion crop, ca. 1300

- Compassio of Mary
- Compassion





Giovanni Pisano, Pulpit of Sant' Andrea, Pistoia, ca. 1300



Facade - Church of Sant' Andrea, (Pieve di Sant'Andrea), is a church from 8th century in Pistoia, Tuscany, central Italy

Fig. 3.5 Giovanni Pisano, Pistoia pulpit, Crucifixion crop, ca. 1300

- Compassio of Mary
- Compassion
- How does this type of portrayal change our ideas of the figure of Mary?



# Women as Readers and Patrons of Books

- Secular Manuscript Illumination
  - Vernacular

There were many ways women were engaged with books in the Middle Ages. What are some of them?

Saint Anne Teaching the Virgin to Read, 1343  
Painters: Ramon Destorrents (Spain, active 1351-1391),  
Arnau Bassa (Spain, active 1345-1348), Ferrer Bassa  
(Spain, †1348)



IOANNIS BOCCATII  
DE CERTALDO INSIGNE OPVS  
de Claris Mulieribus.

TYPOGRAPHVS LECTORI S. D.

En Candide Lector offerimus tibi opus illustre Io: Bocca: de claris mulieribus, in quo recensentur, illae quae & honestate & turpitudine excellere, ubi simul intelliges, qui ex honestis prauisque studijs euentus consequantur, quicquid etiam Poeticis fabulis de mulieribus inuolutum est, hic ad liquidum traditur, ut facile colligas, unde fabula duxerit originem, & quid deinde artificij Rhetorici à Poëta accesserit, quae omnia bona fide tradita, succincta lepidaque, & ob Historiae rerumque gestarum uarietatem comoda & utilia sunt lectu, ut opere perlustrato, te decuplo plus precij impendere malle iures, quam tanto thesauro carere, Eme & fruire meque uera dixisse experieris, Vale.



BERNAE HELVET  
Excudebat Mathias Apianus.

\*

A

Giovanni Boccaccio on Ancient  
Greek and Roman Women  
Painters from *Famous Women*  
(1361)

The First Book Written  
Exclusively About Women

Left: Title page from Boccaccio,  
Concerning Famous Women



# IOANNIS BOCCATII

DE CERTALDO INSIGNE OPVS

de Claris Mulieribus.

TYPOGRAPHVS LECTORI S. D.

En Candide Lector offerimus tibi opus illustre Io: Bocca: de claris mulieribus, in quo recensentur, illae quae & honestate & turpitudine excellere, ubi simul intelliges, qui ex honestis prauisque studijs euentus consequantur, quicquid etiam Poeticis fabulis de mulieribus inuolutum est, hic ad liquidum traditur, ut facile colligas, vnde fabula duxerit originem, & quid deinde artificij Rhetorici à Poëta accesserit, quae omnia bona fide tradita, succincta lepidaque, & ob Historiae rerumque gestarum uarietatem comoda & utilia sunt lectu, vt opere perlustrato, te decuplo plus precij impendere malle iures, quam tanto thesauro carere, Eme & fruire mecum uera dixisse experieris, Vale.



BERNAE HELVET

Excudebat Mathias Apianus.

\*

A

Eve, the first woman in the Bible

Semiramis, queen of the Assyrians

Opis, wife of Saturn

Juno, goddess of the Kingdoms

Ceres, goddess of the harvest and queen of Sicily

Minerva

Venus

Isis, queen and goddess of Egypt



Fig. 3.6 Marcia, Self-Portrait from a Mirror, ca. 1403

*speculum dominarum*

Another woman Boccaccio writes about is a certain Marcia, Daughter of Varro:

“It has long been known that in Rome there was a woman named Marcia, daughter of Varro, who remained a virgin all her life. But I do not remember having found out which Varro it was or even when she lived. I believe that this woman should be extolled all the more because she was legally independent and preserved her virginity in its full integrity of her own free will, not because of the coercion of a higher authority. As a matter of fact, I do not find that she was bound by holy orders to Vesta or subject to a vow made to Diana or entangled in another commitment – all reasons which curb and restrain women. I believe it was through purity of mind alone that she conquered the sting of the flesh, which occasionally overcomes even the most illustrious men, and she kept her body unblemished by any relations with men until her death.”

- Book of Hours
- Bourgot
- Jean Le Noir
- Jean, Duc de Berry (1340-1416)
- Women in painters' guild in Bruges

# Embroidery

- The Bayeux Tapestry
- Opus Anglicanum
  - Mabel of Bury St. Edmonds
  - Rose of Buford



Fig. 3.7 The Bayeux Tapestry scene 43 banquet (ca. 1070-1080)

Bishop Odo blesses the first banquet that Duke William and the Norman Barons hold on English soil. The bishop is recognisable by his tonsure and also by the fish in front of him. The Latin translates to "And here the bishop blesses the food and drink".



- cope

Fig. 3.8 Opus Anglicanum, Syon Cope, 1310-1320

- Quatrefoils
- What do we see at the center of the four quatrefoils here?





The Toledo Cope, England, circa 1320-30. Cabildo Catedral Primada, Toledo



King David, detail from an orphrey panel depicting the Tree of Jesse, England, circa 1310-25. MTMAD, Lyons





The Vatican Cope, England, circa 1280-1300. Musei Vaticani



The Clare Chasuble, Persia (?) (satin weave ground cloth), England (silk, silver and silver-gilt embroidery), circa 1270-1294. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 673-1864

- How does the demand for Opus Anglicanum change the political economy of embroidery? How does it transform where and how the labor of embroidery happened?

# Urban Working Women 1200-1600

- Christine de Pizan

Who was this woman?!?!



Fig. 3.9 Christine de Pisan presenting her work to Queen Isabel of Bavaria, ca. 1414

- Family production unit
- Matronage

# *The Book of the City of Ladies*

- What is this book about and who wrote it?

# *The Book of the City of Ladies*

This is a book by Christine de Pizan. It is the first defense of women written by a woman. She is considered "the first feminist," meaning that she was the first writer who understood gender roles as a cultural, not primarily a biological, issue.

Widowed at the age of twenty-five, Christine de Pizan was able to support herself, her children, and her widowed mother through the income derived from her writing of over thirty texts and the sale of manuscripts of her work.

-- Wendy Slatkin



Christine de Pizan, *The Book of Peace*, 1412-1414 This copy of the book features a miniature by the Flemish artist Jean Hennecart (fl. 1454–1475) in which Christine presents a copy of her work to the Dauphin, or Crown Prince of France, Louis de Guyenne (1397–1415)



What was the *Querelle des Femmes*?

Christine de Pizan, *The Book of Peace*, 1412-1414 This copy of the book features a miniature by the Flemish artist Jean Hennecart (fl. 1454–1475) in which Christine presents a copy of her work to the Dauphin, or Crown Prince of France, Louis de Guyenne (1397–1415)



The French phrase **querelle des femmes**, meaning "the woman question," refers to a literary debate about the nature and status of women. This debate began around 1500 and continued beyond the end of the Renaissance.

Slatkin defines it as a discourse that argued for equality of women. Beginning ca 1400, a number of writers, both male and female, presented arguments for the education and virtuous character of women to counter the dominant gender ideology of misogyny.