

From Mouth to Mind:  
A Close Examination of Two Carved Boxwood Peapods  
Through Print, Paint, and Sculpture & References to Fertility

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of the Arts  
of Bard College

by  
Amanda Jane Mason

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York  
May 2023

## *Dedication*

To my beloved grandmother, stepfather, and feline companion who left this world before I could complete my studies, this research paper is dedicated to you. Your unwavering support, love, and encouragement throughout my academic journey continue to inspire me, even in your absence. Your memories will always remain a source of strength and motivation, pushing me to strive for excellence in all my endeavors.

To my mother, thank you for your unwavering love, support, and encouragement throughout my academic journey. Your constant presence and belief in me have been the driving force behind my success, and I am forever grateful for everything you have done for me. I hope that this work makes you proud and shows you how much I value the lessons you have taught me about hard work, perseverance, and resilience.

Thank you for shaping me into the person I am today,  
and for inspiring me to pursue my dreams.

## *Acknowledgements*

I want to thank my advisor, Katherine Boivin, for introducing me to the fascinating world of art history and for always making the content interesting and engaging. Her passion for the subject matter and commitment to helping her students thrive has been truly inspiring.

I am grateful for her tireless efforts in supporting my research and for her dedication to helping the art history department and its students succeed. Her positive attitude, kindness, and compassion have made a lasting impression on me, and I feel lucky to have had her as my advisor. I am honored to have worked with you and will forever appreciate your guidance and support.

I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to Professor Susan Merriam for her unwavering support and encouragement throughout my studies in late medieval and early modern Northern European, specifically Dutch, art. Her ability to share her extensive knowledge of art history in an approachable and accessible manner has been truly remarkable. I feel incredibly fortunate to have had her as a professor and I am deeply grateful for her guidance and passion.

I would also like to acknowledge the Art Gallery of Ontario's Boxwood Project Collection and Small Wonders exhibit for the opportunity to appreciate the intricate details of these rare and precious boxwood artifacts. Lastly, special thanks to Frits Scholten, the leading scholar on almost all aspects of boxwood, for his invaluable contributions to the research and understanding of these delicate objects. Thank you both for your efforts to preserve and promote this important aspect of cultural heritage, which has inspired my own research.

*Table of Contents*

CHAPTER I: Introduction..... 1

CHAPTER II: The History of the Pea Plant ..... 6

CHAPTER III: Pea Flowers and Pods in Manuscripts..... 11

CHAPTER IV: Netherlandish Boxwood Carvings..... 30

CHAPTER V: Two Carved Peapods ..... 46

CONCLUSION..... 75

BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 80

FIGURES..... 86

## CHAPTER I

### *Introduction*

For a brief period from the late fifteenth to early sixteenth century in the Netherlands, a group of Dutch artists developed an almost unprecedented style of miniature carving, depicting traditional narratives from the Bible in extremely small cases of varying shapes. The carvers used boxwood, a wood with a dense grain and nearly as expensive as ivory, to depict traditional scenes such as the Nativity, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection, among others, often within prayer beads, diptychs,<sup>1</sup> or altarpieces of no more than ten centimeters in size. Most of these devotional objects were made in only a few workshops near Utrecht and Guelders, and a handful of objects made their way into Belgian, French, and even English courts. Due to the incredible skill it took to create these objects, they were commissioned by the highest levels of society; the noblemen, aristocrats, and the nouveau riche of sixteenth century Netherlands, and seem to have been favored more by women and clergymen. These patrons could attach their carvings, often prayer beads in the shape of a sphere, to their belts or rosaries as a public symbol of not only their wealth, but also their religiosity and ability to practice in private.

The Art Gallery of Ontario has conducted a large portion of the research on boxwood carvings, collecting the surviving 135 carvings into one website, The Boxwood Project. Due to the iconoclasm that took place during the 1560s following the Protestant Reformation, there would have likely been a much larger group of objects circulating during the sixteenth century that have been lost to time for a number of reasons. The AGO's Boxwood Project worked with the top scholars on boxwood carvings to create a traveling exhibition in 2017 and a comprehensive book along with it. *Small Wonders: Late Gothic Boxwood Microcarvings from*

---

<sup>1</sup> A diptych is an artwork consisting of two painted or carved panels.

*the Low Countries* is the most comprehensive work to date on boxwood carvings, made up of essays from various scholars exploring different aspects of the pieces. While the inspiration for *Small Wonders* came around in 2012, the carvings have a long history of intrigue.

The first recorded piece of writing on boxwood was actually written in 1633 by Joost van Cranevelt, writing about a prayer bead that had likely been passed down through his family. In his essay, he thoroughly describes the object, its ingenious creation, who it might have been made by, and reflects deeply on its intricate details. In another letter written by Cranevelt, he mentions visiting the recipients “constcabinet,” or curiosity cabinet, and sends with the letter, a “very lovely and curious drawing by the famous illuminator and beautiful painter [Georg] Hoefnagel, a flower arrangement,” further emphasizing the Cranevelts involvement and appreciation of artworks at the time.<sup>2</sup>

While Cranevelt might have been the first to write about the carvings, he was certainly not the last, although it took a while for the objects to draw the attention of new scholars. Henri G. Marceau is one of the earliest modern scholars to discuss boxwood, with more seminal works coming in the late 1960s from Jaap Leeuwenberg, a conservator of the Rijksmuseum. Following Leeuwenberg there seems to have been a lull in interest until Frits Scholten and other scholars became increasingly interested in the early 2000s. Namely Reindert Falkenburg, Ingmar Reesing, Alexandra Suda, Barbara Drake Boehm, Pete Dandridge, and Lisa Ellis have worked on *Small Wonders* and written a number of independent articles on different aspects of boxwood carvings.

However, within the small surviving group of carvings, two extremely unique carvings in the shape of peapods have been almost entirely glossed over by other scholars. In *Small Wonders*, Frits Scholten discusses them in their entirety in three paragraphs, and mentions their similarity to peas depicted in the *Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves* and eighteenth century

---

<sup>2</sup> DBNL, “4713. J. van Cranevelt. (K.A.), Briefwisseling. Deel 4.”

tobacco boxes. Scholten associated the carvings with ideas surrounding death, fertility, rebirth and erotica, but does not explore the reasons behind that much further. The little amount of writing on the boxwood peapods is likely due to the lack of provenance and any other literature on them, despite the fact that there are no other objects in the collection like them.

Most of the boxwood objects in the collection are Prayer Beads, in the shape of a sphere, sometimes referred to as prayer apples or nuts, which open on a hinge to reveal two or more minutely carved scenes within. The next most common type of boxwood carving, although there are many less examples of these, are the miniature altarpieces that depict many of the same narratives from the Bible in the way that larger altarpieces do. Their miniature size made them very easy to transport, likely from one estate to another and into an area for private devotion. Similarly, only a few of the extremely detailed boxwood rosaries have survived, one of which almost certainly was made for or belonged to King Henry VIII of England and his wife Katherine of Aragon.

While prayer beads, altarpieces, and rosaries make up the majority of the carved boxwood objects, there are a handful that belong in the miscellaneous category, including the peapods. It seems clear that while the two peapods were made by a different hand, the artists made an incredible effort to make the peapods look as naturalistic as possible. The more elaborate and possibly higher quality peapod is ten centimeters in length, with a polished exterior and indentations that imply peas inside the pod. The second peapod shows more signs of use and wear, and is only 7.6 centimeters long, but has similar markings to the first that imply there are peas on the inside of the pod.

Like a normal peapod that one might eat, the carved ones are also able to open and have intricately carved scenes within. The first peapod opens to reveal five peas, much like a real

peapod would, all attached at the hinge, that are also able to be opened. Each of the peas can be opened to reveal one scene carved in each half. The second peapod's interior differs drastically from the first, with one scene carved into each half of the pod. The first peapod stands out as a devotional aid similar to rosaries, but, as we will see, the second peapod's choice of scenes to depict is very interesting, and difficult to ascribe any particular meaning to.

What is the importance of the peapod shape and the scenes represented within? Who would have commissioned these objects and how would they have been used? To try and shed light on the use of these objects, this project considers the evidence from a wide range of sources, from manuscript illuminations to horticultural practice, from religious symbolism to collecting practices. Ultimately we will see that these carved peapods were likely commissioned by both upper class men and women, highly associated with ideas surrounding fertility, possibly sexuality, and speaks to a period in the Netherlands during the start of the Protestant Reformation where private devotion was encouraged, but before the iconoclasm of the late sixteenth century.

The following three chapters consider the boxwood peapods against the context gathered from different sources. In chapter one, I look at the inspiration for the shape of the carvings: the peapod. Today, peapods like snap peas and snow peas, are common throughout the world, and while the medieval world had more seasonal access to the plant, peapods and similar legumes were often still a staple food throughout Europe and the Mediterranean, so much so that they were mentioned in the Old Testament. Chapter two turns to representations of peapods in medieval manuscripts, such as botanical illustrations and books of hours, that early sixteenth century patrons and artists might have encountered, possibly inspiring the shape of the peapod carvings. Peapods and their flowers were often included near the Virgin Mary in the margins of books of hours, devotional books usually made for women, passed down and used in the family,



possibly from woman to woman. The plants were not limited to the Virgin, appearing in other scenes around Christ and other Saints, with a less clear symbolic connection. Chapter three largely considers the material background of the peapods, such as where the wood was sourced, how it was carved, who commissioned the objects, and the collections the objects were apart of. Finally, in chapter four, I explore the interiors of the peapods, and the possible symbolism of specific details. Along with this, I try to expand upon the possible ownership of the objects and reasons for depicting specific scenes.

## CHAPTER II

### *The History of the Pea Plant*

The most obvious reference for the two boxwood peapods is to the pods of the pea plant itself. It is therefore important to understand the form, cultivation, use of peas leading up to the moment when they were translated into a wooden medium with miniature scenes within by artists working in the Netherlands between 1500 and 1530.

According to “Cowpea Post-Harvest Operations in Developing Countries” published by the FAO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the initial cultivation of legumes and pea plants has been traced back to Africa and Asia, dating to at least a few millennia before the birth of Christ. Traces of broad beans have also been found in archaeological excavations of Troy, possibly one of the many riches collected by King Priam.<sup>3</sup> A second cultivation event later occurred in the Middle East, and spread to Europe and western Asia from there, and in each culture and region gained its own significance.

Although there are slight variations between each species, the pea plant is usually planted in early spring, often the first to be planted and sprout. As they grow they try to grow upwards with twisting vines that grab onto nearby structures, such as fences or trellises (Figure 2.1). Without vertical support, they tend to sprawl out over the ground with little effect on their growth or fruit production. The flowers of the peapod are usually white or dark purple, or somewhere in between, with a pleasant smell. The flowers are quite small, with two large and two small petals, sometimes described as a butterfly shape. Finally, the plant produces a peapod with a number of peas within. When left to dry the pods turn from green to a brownish yellow,

---

<sup>3</sup> Toussaint-Samat, *A History of Food*, 37.

and once dry enough the pods split open and disperse their seeds. Dried peas were especially important as they were able to be stored for much longer than their fresh counterparts.

There are a number of different species of pea plants that have been used throughout history, and though they vary slightly in shape and size, the uses and symbolism of peapods is quite similar. The pea that we are probably most familiar with today is the English pea, *Pisum sativum*, although the exterior was only modified to be edible in the eighteenth century. The pea that has been most used throughout history is likely the Field pea, *Vigna unguiculata*, known for its black-eyed peas (Figure 2.2). Field peas are similar, with slight differences that set it distinctly apart from the English pea, such as its straighter stems, broader leaves, and, most obviously, much longer pods. While the English pea and similar varieties have between three and ten peas per pod, the *Vigna unguiculata* has twenty or more peas per single pod. Peas were usually left until dry and then used in stews and porridges, or ground into a flour to make bread or paste. Peas, and legumes in general, were useful in the diet of both upper and lower classes as they contained starch, proteins, and mineral salts and were typically quite filling, sometimes called “the poor man’s meat.”<sup>4</sup>

The abundant production of the pea plant and its nutritional value made it a staple food in times of hardship. The field pea in particular was mentioned by Charles the Good, Count of Flanders, in 1124 as staving off famine, and during a famine in 1135,<sup>5</sup> Saint Bernard<sup>6</sup> is believed to have made bread out of bitter vetch, a plant smaller but similar to peas, to eat with his monks.

As Rosemarie Bergmann notes, legumes also have a long history with Christianity, mentioned a few times in the Old Testament. First, legumes and beans were fed to David and others with him, hungry from being out in the desert (2 Kings 17:28). Second, God bid Ezekiel to

---

<sup>4</sup> Toussaint-Samat, 36.

<sup>5</sup> Conflicting sources. Famine of 1135 or 1124-1126

<sup>6</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux (Northern France), from high nobility of Burgundy,

take beans, lentils, and grains to make bread to eat during the siege of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 4:9). Lastly, Daniel declined meat in favor of legumes to “make them fatter than the meat-eating youths” (Daniel 1:12).<sup>7</sup> Legumes and beans have been a staple for millenia, valued for the sustenance they provide, particularly in times of hardship. Their mention in the Old Testament as particularly useful during times of famine would have taught the faithful what foods to look for during their own famines, cementing their place in the human diet throughout the continents and centuries.

Used in multiple cultures, peas have been ascribed different properties in each. They have been used in relation to specific Saints and specific feast days in a number of European countries, in addition to a number of different superstitions involved with eating peas on specific days that would affect one's luck, or even their lifespan. Many of the feast-days were in April and May, and served as reminders of when to plant the peas, such as in Germany with Saint Ambrosius, Saint Mark, Saint Job, and Saint Matthew, or in Belgium, right before Saint Catherine's day.<sup>8</sup> Overwhelmingly, it seems that peas were believed to have an effect on fertility and marriages. In France, Germany, England, and Scotland, peapods have been used for predictions, specifically ones with nine or more peas, often for events to do with marriage or finding love. In England, if a pod with nine or more peas was found, the maid would place it above the door, and, almost like mistletoe, the next man to walk in might end up being her husband.<sup>9</sup> This practice was so common that it had a specific term, “peascod wooing,” and was played upon by numerous seventeenth century British poets, notably by Shakespeare in *As You Like It*.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Bergmann, “Notes on the Ottawa Madonna with the Flowering Pea,” 72.

<sup>8</sup> Cleene and Lejeune, *Compendium of Symbolic and Ritual Plants in Europe*, 2002, 1:447.

<sup>9</sup> Cleene and Lejeune, 1:447.

<sup>10</sup> Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act II Scene IV line 51

In 1653, in his book on herbalism, Nicholas Culpeper noted that peas “provoke urine, and are thought to increase sperm” and “provokes women’s courses [menstruation] and urine, increases both milk and seed.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, peas were considered effective for men’s and women’s fertility supporting not only conception but also the feeding of an infant once born. These associations, as we will see, resonate in the boxwood peapod objects, produced in the Netherlands in the late medieval and early modern period.

Also important during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was the rosarium. Reindert Falkenburg relates the use of pomanders and prayer beads to the garden in the Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon), drawing attention to the “simultaneously sensual description of the love-union of a bride and bridegroom, situated in a garden, or more specifically, evoked with an array of garden images which refer also to the womb of the bride.”<sup>12</sup> Falkenburg draws attention to the “image of the ‘garden of the soul,’”<sup>13</sup> and meditative texts that described plants in great detail as metaphors for virtues, for the religious to cultivate a “garden of virtue and compassion in their own souls.”<sup>14</sup>

Marika Takanishi Knowles, a professor at the University of St Andrews notes that, “collectors often built galleries for their collection of objects within gardens that held the live specimens; thus on-the-spot comparison would have been possible.” The combined interest in gardens from rosariums and curiosity cabinets could have provided the perfect circumstances for the creation of not one, but two carved peapods. It would not be unreasonable to assume that the boxwood peapods could have been taken to a garden, or the garden brought to them, for direct comparison to the real thing. Seeing the carved peapod next to the real would have emphasized

---

<sup>11</sup> Cleene and Lejeune, *Compendium of Symbolic and Ritual Plants in Europe*, 2002, 1:449.

<sup>12</sup> Scholten and Falkenburg, *A Sense of Heaven: 16th Century Boxwood Carvings for Private Devotion*, 33.

<sup>13</sup> Scholten and Falkenburg, 34.

<sup>14</sup> Falkenburg, “Prayer Nuts: Feasting the ‘Eyes of the Heart,’” 16.

the incredible talent of the artists that made it, a God-given skill, as well as the beauty of nature created by God, possibly encouraging further meditation and prayer. In a similar vein, if peas or pea pods were used in meals, the owner of the carving might be drawn into pious thought, even without directly using the devotional aid.

Despite their small place on plates in the modern world, peapods have long been a part of human culture, often eaten as a staple food during famines, and closely related to superstitions about marriages and fertility. Their prevailing use throughout Europe also solidified their abundant reproduction in art such as paintings, drawings, carvings, sculptures, ceramics and so on. In the following chapter we will explore the place of peapods in botanical illustrations and illuminated manuscripts during the fourteenth century, and how ideas of fertility and peapods were associated with the Virgin Mary because of her immaculate conception. Images of peapods in the margins of manuscripts may have informed the patrons or carvers of the boxwood peapods and associated them with fertility.

## CHAPTER III

### *Pea Flowers and Pods in Manuscripts*

The pea plant, and in particular its pods, has a long symbolic history and during the medieval to early modern period it seems to have taken on a strong association not only with fertility but also with the Virgin Mary. In particular, we find the use of pea imagery in the margins of richly illuminated manuscripts, especially Books of Hours where they appear in connection with images of Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus. In manuscripts, peapods and pea flowers often appear in the margins along with a host of other plants and flowers. While this plant imagery serves to to decorate the pages of these late medieval manuscripts, they also display an interest in observations of nature and can sometimes be linked symbolically to accompanying figural scenes. Appearing around the same time in early scientific botanical illustrations, and herbariums, it is likely that the readers of these books belonged to an elite noble and educated class of collectors, capable of drawing symbolic associations across different types of texts and visual motifs, now often separated into different disciplinary categories. For the late medieval patrons of this privileged group, these biblical references, manuscript illuminations, herbariums, and boxwood objects referencing peas would have opened a focused yet resonant discourse at the intersection of personal experience, religion, mythology, and scientific knowledge.

One of the earliest known examples of pea plants in a scientific or medicinal manuscript is in the *Carrara Herbal* from the thirteenth century, originally copied from Arabic by Serapion the Younger in the twelfth century.<sup>15</sup> The *Carrara Herbal* pairs a pea plant, “De lo orobo,” with a paragraph of text on the upper half of the page. This pea plant is distinct from others in that it is not floating in space, but seemingly just the top of the plant, implying that there might be more

---

<sup>15</sup> British Library Digitised Manuscripts Content description

of the plant off the border of the page. It almost seems as if the creator of the book simply went up to a pea plant and closed the book on the top few vines, almost exactly how herbalists would press different plants in their books for preservation. Although this pea plant lacks flowers, and is made up of a number of leaves and four peapods, was painted in only slightly varying shades of green (Figure 3.1). Later herbariums and scientific illustrations follow a similar layout, with a pea plant removed from its original environment and represented an empty space, often paired with a label and possibly further information about the plant. Scientific illustrations of plants in this manner often included the plants' different stages of growth collapsed in time into one plant, including the leaves, the flower, and the fruit, that in reality would not have been able to exist.

While the artists that made these types of illustrations made a pointed effort to depict the differentiating characteristics of each plant, some of them are slightly stylized. The stylization of the plants could possibly be due to the artist's lower level of skill in depicting the plants, but it seems more likely that it would have been a stylistic decision made by the artist, making the plant look more appealing than it might in real life. A stylized pea plant might look like one seen in the Book of Flower Studies from the Master of Claude de France from 1510 to 1515 (Figure 3.2). This pea plant is depicted with most stages of the flower, showing new flower blossoms and fully bloomed flowers, big and small leaves, and two peapods towards the bottom. The artist in this case has paid attention both to the lightning green color of the stem, possibly as the plant gets closer to the sun and thus drier, as well as the fruiting stages of the plant, occurring from bottom to top as the plant has grown. Additionally, the artist has taken care to show the pea flower from two different perspectives, and has included an insect eating the leaf to signal the plants use as food for insects as well. While the plant is not depicted exactly how it would appear in real life, it conveys all the necessary information about the plant, such as the shape of the



leaves, the peapods and reference to the peas inside, curling vines, different stages of flowers, and its place in a wider ecosystem.<sup>16</sup>

Another stylized illustration of the pea plant exists in a manuscript from 1501, “Le jardin de sante (the health garden)” from Antoine Vérard (Figure 3.3). In this case the illustration of the pea plant is likely made from a print, rather than painted. The print makes sure to include the necessary details of the plant without overindulging on perfecting the form or shading. This pea plant is just as recognizable as the painted ones, with the only difference being the lack of color in the flowers. Although it might not have been as visually intriguing or colorful, the printable nature of it made it much easier to replicate and share. After the printing press was invented in 1436, the creation of books and dissemination of knowledge became much more accessible for those who had the funds. Antoine Vérard himself was a popular bookmaker in the late fifteenth century, working for the upper classes of society, most remarkably Charles VIII of France and Henry VII of England,<sup>17</sup> making both secular and religious texts such as books of hours and natural histories. Vérard’s small and seemingly undetailed illustration of the pea plant is representative of a much larger system of knowledge sharing, where the vital information could be in the text and the illustration did not need to carry that burden, that could reach the highest levels of court. And it is to this category of more naturalistic representations of peas that the two boxwood carvings belong.

Like illustrations and prints, the exteriors of the carved peapods include important defining features of the peapod, like its stem and indentations. The peapod that opens to reveal five peas is the more naturalistic of the two, and was likely made to a higher standard, possibly by choice or ability of the artist, or by the amount the patron paid for it. Almost no provenance

---

<sup>16</sup> “Master of Claude de France | Book of Flower Studies | French.”

<sup>17</sup> “Antoine Vérard’s Early Printed Books in the British Library.”

for either of the peas before the late nineteenth century has been noted, making it difficult to discern who, where, or why they were created. The first peapod still retains its completely looped stem, with a slight curl on the end, and a scalloped border where it attaches to the pod itself, exactly like the real and drawn peapods (Figure 3.4). The second peapod, in slightly rougher condition, is also complete with a stem and crenelated top (Figure 3.5). Due to the condition of the carving, it might be possible that the peapod was initially made with a stem similar to the first peapod, but broke off over the course of over five centuries.

Interestingly, the second peapod has four distinct lines demarcating where five peapods would be inside, despite the fact that this peapod has two low relief scenes on its interior, not peas. On the other hand, the first peapod opens to reveal five peas, although its polished exterior references the peas within more subtly. The two sides of the pod are slightly different; when the hinge of the pod is on the left, the top of the pod, through slight indentations, clearly implies to peas within, possibly one more on the very top and bottom of it. When the hinge of the pod is on the right, the pod implies three pods within. The carvers took care to include the defining aspects of peapods so that they were almost instantaneously recognizable.

Throughout the early modern period, scientific and botanical illustrations, often combined into books, gained massive popularity, especially after the invention of the printing press. Secular works like herbariums and pattern books both disseminated knowledge about their subjects, and how they looked, such as plants and animals, with relative accuracy. Secular representations of plants still might have played a part in the creation of religious works, such as Books of Hours, as many flowering plants were included in the margins of them. Even so, less religious works, such as the Tudor Pattern Book, might have been inspired to organize the plants and animals symbolically in ways that the medieval viewer would recognize.

Scientific and botanical illustrations of plants were also used in pattern books for artists. These pattern books would include different plants, animals, alphabet styles, coats of arms, and decorative flourishes that the artist could quickly reference for when creating larger works of art. The English *Tudor Pattern Book*,<sup>18</sup> made between 1520 and 1530, a pea plant can be seen in two instances. First, it appears underneath two other plants that are labeled, Madder and Belladonna. It is shown complete with leaves, vines, pods, and flowers (Figure 3.6). This version of the pea plant is even more stylized than the one by the Master of Claude de France, with vines more like string than the stem of a real plant. This plant stands out as particularly stylized as it doesn't use as much shading as the Master of Claude pea plant, relying more on line to imply the pattern and shape of the plant. It's interesting to note that in this book the pea plant first appears with madder, *Rubia tinctorum*, a plant commonly used to dye fabrics and also mentioned by Nicholas Culpeper to treat a number of illnesses, namely when women "have not their courses."<sup>19</sup>

The pea plant is also next to the belladonna plant, or *Atropa belladonna*, named for its use as a cosmetic, meaning "beautiful woman" in Italian. Although these two plants are not closely related to the pea plant, it seems that the artist might have made an effort to place these plants together because of their associated uses. Pea plants, as we will see, have a close relationship and association with fertility, the madder plant is related to women's menstruation cycles, and the belladonna is related to women both in its name, and in its use as a beautifying product. It seems likely that these three plants were grouped together due to their relation to women.

When the pea plant appears in the same manuscript with its label, its counterpart is the rose (Figure 3.7). The pea plant appears largely similar to its first depiction, with more emphasis

---

<sup>18</sup> Contains the coat of Arms of John de Vere, from War of Roses, served under Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, godfather to Arthur, second wife members of household of Catherine of Aragon

<sup>19</sup> Culpeper, "The Complete Herbal."

placed on its vertical nature rather than horizontal, although both orientations wouldn't have been out of the ordinary. The white pea flowers of the plant are complemented by the large white roses on the rose bush. In Christian symbolism, the red rose was most often associated with the blood and sacrifice of Christ, while white flowers were associated with the Virgin Mary and her purity. While the lily is the flower most often associated with Mary, white flowers in general are also associated with her, and in this case the white rose could represent both Christ and Mary.<sup>20</sup> It is interesting to note that even in botanical illustrations, hidden symbolic values might still be at play in the organization of these plants.<sup>21</sup> The pattern books' deliberate organization of subjects is further emphasized when I discuss the symbolic meaning of animals.

\*

While botanical illustrations were incredibly useful for artists and scholars increasingly interested in the specifics of plants, plants are also seen in the margins of other manuscripts, most commonly in Books of Hours.<sup>22</sup> Largely due to the rise of the *Devotio Moderna* that emphasized pious reading and writing in the Northern Netherlands in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries,<sup>23</sup> illuminated manuscripts, such as books of hours, were extremely popular. Books of Hours were the most common type of manuscript for Christians in the Netherlands, with more than half of them in the vernacular rather than in Latin, the most common (almost exclusive) language for other religious texts during this period.<sup>24</sup> Books of Hours were used to pray at specific canonical hours that included religious narratives and psalms, complete with simple decorative motifs surrounding letters and in the margins. Wealthy individuals such as royals, noblemen, aristocrats,

---

<sup>20</sup> Bravinder, "7 Favorite Flowers from Renaissance Manuscripts and Their Christian Symbolism."

<sup>21</sup> It is also interesting to note the group of four children playing instruments and fighting below the two plants.

<sup>22</sup> Marrow et al., *The Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript Painting*.

<sup>23</sup> Marrow et al., 9.

<sup>24</sup> Marrow et al., 9.

newly wealthy merchants, and even clergymen were able to commission Hours with full page illustrations and miniatures with rich colors and gold leaf. The most well known and most elaborate example is the *Très Riches Heures* (Figure 3.8), created at the beginning of the fifteenth century for John, Duke of Berry, an ancestor of both French and Habsburg rulers. The Netherlands was home to one of the most developed and intricate artistic traditions for illustrating both religious and secular books during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Pea plants were not limited to secular illustration and were included in the margins of numerous manuscripts throughout the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, sometimes directly related to representations of the Virgin Mary. In these cases, the pea plants are often represented near the Nativity, Annunciation scenes, or other stories related to the Virgin Mary. Historian James Marrow points to the beginning decades of the sixteenth century as the Dutch golden age of manuscript illumination, clearly visible in the rich illustrations in wealthy patrons' books of hours. Throughout a number of books of hours, pea plants and flowers are shown in close association with the Virgin Mary, with two of particular note. Two manuscripts have illustrations of open pods with gold leaf peas, symbolic of fertility, abundance, and possibly the wisdom of Mary.

Historian James Marrow points to Albrecht of Bavaria and Margaret of Cleves moving of the Dutch court from Holland to The Hague at the end of the fourteenth century, as one of the most influential factors that created the short but vibrant period of Netherlandish manuscript illumination at the beginning of the fifteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Specifically, Marrow notes that Albrecht and Margaret's *Biblia Pauperum* and Book of Hours introduced "an accomplished and inventive

---

<sup>25</sup> Marrow et al., 10.

court style of illumination, which introduces expressive devices – such as figures dramatically overlapping their frames – later to be found in Catherine’s [of Cleves] famous manuscript.”<sup>26</sup>

Pea pods and flowers, both individually and together as the plant, appear in the margins of many manuscripts, sometimes without a clear connection to the illustrations or text. One manuscript from Flanders at the end of the fifteenth century has a small pea plant in the margins on the page opposite a depiction of Saint Nicholas (Figure 3.9).<sup>27</sup> In the same manuscript, on the next page following the one with a pea plant, pea flowers and pods decorate the margins around an illustration of Saint Christopher carrying Christ across a stream, where Christopher is ‘bearing the weight of the world’ on his shoulders (Figure 3.10).<sup>28</sup> Though both Saint Nicholas and Saint Christopher were associated with travel, especially across water, it seems here that the pea plant might simply be included as another common plant and flower that Europeans would have interacted with often enough to include in their margins, rather than as symbolically significant.

In another manuscript from the fifteenth century, also made in Flanders, there are a number of flowers in the margins surrounding an illustration of a Tournament before Arthur (Figure 3.11). This set of margins is interesting as it includes not only pea flowers and pea pods, but also white roses and red roses, a deep blue flower, possibly a violet or flax<sup>29</sup> flower, and pink irises. Each of these flowers are closely related to Christ and Mary, the Passion, their humility, and purity in the case of Mary. There was a well known selection of flowers that were used in manuscripts to subtly reference these qualities and aspects key to Christianity, however their connection to the illuminations and text is more difficult to piece together. Seeing as this tournament looks to be a violent scene, the flowers could try and serve as a reminder to practice

---

<sup>26</sup> Marrow et al., 11.

<sup>27</sup> “Bodleian Library MS. Douce 8.”

<sup>28</sup> “Saint Christopher Carrying Christ | German.”

<sup>29</sup> “Plants Of The Garden.”

peaceful Christian qualities related to Christ and the Virgin Mary. The margin also includes two peacocks, one seen from the side and the other from the front with its train displayed. These peacocks could further support the theory that the margins are meant to remind the viewer to practice peace and humility as the birds were often associated with eternal life, and the eyes on their train feathers with the all seeing eye of God. It is also interesting to note that the pea flowers are the only ones that are shown with the fruit of the plant, possibly emphasizing the dual use of the plant as a beautiful flower with edible fruit.

A number of books owned by nobility feature pea pods and flowers in close proximity to the Virgin Mary. The earliest known combination of these motifs is in a Book of Hours with an unknown patron from the Northern Netherlands, either Utrecht or Guelders, made around 1420. The illuminator of this manuscript places a full page illustration of the nativity across from its accompanying text, with the margins full of naturalistic peapods and flowers in a style typical of fourteenth century illumination (Figure 3.12).<sup>30</sup> Marrow notes that the illustrator of this book, the Master of the Morgan Infancy Cycle, intentionally paired the nativity with peapods, as they referenced similar ideas, and that this Master, along with others, laid the foundation for other elaborate manuscripts, such as the Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves, during the golden age of Dutch manuscript illumination during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.<sup>31</sup> This certainly seems born out by the evidence, particularly if we consider the close family connections between the owners of these related manuscripts, as we will in a later chapter.

The Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves, named after its patron, is extremely unique in its depiction of peapods, but also stands out among other manuscripts in its subjects and illustrations. Marrow notes that the Cleves Hours follows the typical format that depicted scenes

---

<sup>30</sup> Marrow, "Dutch Manuscript Illumination Before the Master of Catherine of Cleves," 89.

<sup>31</sup> Marrow, 88.

from the Infancy Cycle, the early life of Jesus, and Christ's Passion, as well as others that more traditionally contrast scenes from the Old Testament to the New Testament.<sup>32</sup> The first major page of illustration in the Hours begins with Catherine praying to the Virgin and Child on the left page, and the Annunciation to Joachim, the Virgin Mary's father (Figure 3.13). According to the pages description, the margins of the two pages includes eight of her ancestors' coat of arms, and, breaking tradition, places her family's ox crest at the forefront instead of her husbands.<sup>33</sup> I mention this to emphasize the Master or Catherine of Cleves herself departure from representational norms.

Only the right side survives of the next illustration in the Cleves Hours. It depicts three angels singing "We praise thee, O god," next to the now-lost Annunciation to Anne in which she becomes pregnant with the Virgin Mary (Figure 3.14). The subject of the two scenes are symbolically represented in the margins through the open pea pods. Surrounding the angels and text, there are six peapods, each with five peas within. The pods have been completely split open but remain attached to the vine, with the outside of the pods painted a darker green than the interior, and three purple flowers between each pair. Most notably however is the gold leaf peas within the pods. Elizabeth R. Schaeffer draws attention to the fact that gold leaf is normally reserved for angels' wings and halos in this manuscript. Schaeffer agrees on the association of pea pods with fertility and further emphasizes this by relating the pods as womb-like and golden peas to the unborn Virgin.<sup>34</sup>

Further illustrations in the margins of the Cleves Hours suggest the book's emphasis on women's sexuality. Steven Stowell points to the margins surrounding Saint Ambrose and Saint Augustine, in which mussels and pierced hearts lead the medieval viewer to think beyond what is

---

<sup>32</sup> Marrow, 59.

<sup>33</sup> "Hours of the Virgin."

<sup>34</sup> Schaeffer, "Image and Meaning in the Floral Borders of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves," 35.



on the page (Figure 3.15). Contemporary associations with mussels and women's sexuality would have led the viewer to recall Saint Ambrose's treatise *On Virginity*, and Saint Augustine's writings on celibacy.<sup>35</sup> A number of the opened mussels on the right side of the margins surrounding Saint Ambrose are shaped similarly to the opened pea pods.

After the peapods take up the entirety of the margins in the beginning of the Hours, small peapods and flowers appear a few other times throughout the book. A small pea pod and flower appear in the margins in the Hours of The Virgin that depicts the *Designation of Joseph*, where Joseph has been chosen as the Virgin Mary's suitor (Figure 3.16).<sup>36</sup> On another page, one peapod and two pink pea flowers are seen in the margins, closest a figure with a halo, possibly Joseph, in the depiction of *Christ before Caiaphas* (Figure 3.17).<sup>37</sup> Lastly, in the decorative, display-like margins surrounding the *Last Judgment*, fourteen different flowers are depicted, including the pea flower *and* peapod, almost directly above Jesus (Figure 3.18). In her discussion of the *Ottawa Madonna*, Rosiemarie Bergmann drew attention to Gentile da Fabriano's *Adoration of the Magi* (possibly confused with the *Strozzi Altarpiece*) dated to 1423, that includes thirty-six different flowers on the posts, three of which are legumes: broad beans, peas, and chickpeas (3.19).<sup>38</sup> An interesting detail of the *Adoration* is that the flowers are not entirely contained to their panels, with leaves and petals sometimes overflowing onto the gold of the border. The flowers in the margins of the Cleves *Last Judgment* follow a similar motif as those on the *Adoration*, on a much smaller scale, both of which clearly emphasize the inclusion and importance of specific flowers, many symbolic of different aspects of Christianity, like the peapod.

---

<sup>35</sup> Stowell, "Reading the Margins in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves," 385.

<sup>36</sup> Catherine of Cleves Hours, folio ?

<sup>37</sup> Catherine of Cleves Hours, folio ?

<sup>38</sup> Bergmann, "Notes on the Ottawa Madonna with the Flowering Pea," 73.

The illuminated book of hours Ms. W.782, also known as the Van Alphen Hours, in the Walters Art Museum was made for a wealthy female patron, much like the Cleves Hours, and was made in the same workshop of the Master of Catherine of Cleves.<sup>39</sup> The Walters peapods are extremely similar to the Cleves pea pods; split down the middle with golden peas (Figure 3.20). The vines of these peapods sprout from behind the text, rather than an inlaid looking branch, and four out of six of the pods have six peas, instead of five. As others have noted, the pea pod motif surrounding text and an image, or shroud, of Christ is difficult to interpret. Lilian Randall suggests that the peas symbolically refer to the fertility and wisdom of the Virgin Mary.<sup>40</sup> The peas might also be included in the margins of the Cleves hours as they were often planted just before Saint Catherine's day in Belgium,<sup>41</sup> and could have functioned as a subtle reference to the owner of the Hours. This would, however, not explain their presence in the Van Alphen Hours.

The Hours of Catherine of Cleves and Van Alphen hours are the only known manuscripts to have opened, golden pea pods as decoration but there are still a number of other Books of Hours that clearly place pea pods in the margins near the Virgin Mary. Scholars have noted similar details from the Catherine of Cleves hours in the Mary of Burgundy Book of Hours, suggesting that the Master of Mary of Burgundy was influenced by the Master of the Cleves Hours.<sup>42</sup> The Mary of Burgundy Hours offers a similar association of the pea plant with the Virgin Mary. Surrounding a miniature of the Annunciation to Mary there are decorative floral motifs, along with four real plants with flowers, one of them being a pea plant (Figure 3.21). The illustration contains all of the important details of the pea plant; vines, leaves, pods, unopened

---

<sup>39</sup> "Walters Ms. W.782, Van Alphen Hours."

<sup>40</sup> Randall, "Pea-Pods and Molluscs from the Master of Catherine of Cleves Workshop," 375.

<sup>41</sup> Cleene and Lejeune, *Compendium of Symbolic and Ritual Plants in Europe*, 2002, 2:447.

<sup>42</sup> Van Buren, "The Master of Mary of Burgundy and His Colleagues."

and opened flowers. Also in the margins are birds throughout the foliage, and a man sitting in the bottom left corner holding a scroll.

In addition to placing the pea plant, a symbol of fertility, next to the Annunciation to Mary, the Hours of Mary of Burgundy also includes a reference to pea pods in the first few pages of the book that serve as a calendar. At the bottom of the page, below the important days and a small illustration, there is a small offshoot of a pea plant facing towards the edge of the book, complete with two opened pea pods and two magenta flowers (Figure 3.22). What stands out is a monkey sitting on the vine, reaching for a pea pod, while the monkey on the page before holds a scale like the woman in the small illustration. Representations of monkeys during the medieval period were often included as references to the base and foolish side of man. What it represents here in connection with the peas is puzzling. There is a strikingly similar representation of the monkeys from the Burgundy Hours to ones in the Book of Hours of Joanna I of Castile, though not combined in the same way with peas (Figure 3.23).

Another strong representation of pea pods in close association with the Virgin Mary can be found in the Book of Hours of Duke Adolph of Cleves made between 1480 and 1490. Adolph of Cleves himself was the brother of Catherine of Cleves and son-in-law to Philip the Good, thus making him a part of the highest level of Dutch society, and his wealth can be clearly seen in the extravagant illustrations in his hours, some of which might have taken years to complete.<sup>43</sup> In Adolphs Hours, pea pods and flowers surround an image of the nativity, with the Virgin Mary in blue robes, Infant Christ in a halo-basket, likely Jacob in red robes (Figure 3.24). They are all under a roofed structure, probably a barn as there are animals in the room behind the figures. Surrounding the image of the nativity and text, there are five pea pods and seven fully bloomed

---

<sup>43</sup> Stowell, "Reading the Margins in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves," 381.

pea flowers. As we have seen in earlier representations of pea pods, the surrounding pods likely refer to Mary's fertility, and the pea flowers to her purity and chastity as she was still a Virgin.

Interestingly, also in the margins is a monkey, almost standing on a flower and holding on to one of the peapods in the upper left corner. Except for light yellow shading marks, the color of the monkey's fur blends into the background color almost completely. The inclusion of the monkey in close proximity to the Virgin Mary and Infant Christ predates Durer's *Virgin and Child with the Monkey* from 1498 (Figure 3.25). Later in Adolph's Hours a few different flowers fill the margins surrounding a full page illustration of King David penitent and a page of text. The two pea flowers and pea pod are a smaller representation of the earlier full margin decoration, complete with a monkey crouched in the corner holding the pea pod. Since the pea flower is included among a handful of other flowers of varying colors and symbolic meanings, the representation is aligned with the marginal floral decorations common in fifteenth-century illuminated manuscripts (Figure 3.26). In most other manuscripts the artist tends to leave out the pea pods, but the inclusion of the monkey is particularly intriguing. The monkey might have been included to reference the base wants of Man, which the monkey represents, use of pea pods.

Pea pods also make an appearance in a prayer book made around 1471 for Charles the Bold, son of Philip the Good and father of Mary of Burgundy. The pea pod appears in the margins of a painting of Saint George slaying the Dragon (Figure 3.27), with a woman and castle in the background, along with a man and woman talking, two birds, and an angel talking to another man, and, of course, stylized foliage combined with real plants. The pea plant is directly below the main scene, with two pods that are open, revealing the pods inside, and one pea flower that was presumably a whiter and brighter pink in its original state. It seems that the couple talking lovingly in the margins is George and the woman from the background. The pea pods and

flowers in close proximity to the couple might reference her purity and fertility, as well as the couple's prosperous relationship.

The illustration of George slaying the dragon is directly before, either next to open book style or on the same folio, is an depiction of Charles the Bold being Presented by an Angel, with more birds, flowers, foliage, and an angel at the bottom of the page with a lute and scroll (Figure 3.28). The close proximity of the scenes was no doubt purposeful in connecting ideas of strength and fecundity to the image of Charles the Bold. While Netherlandish manuscript during the late fifteenth century followed similar representation traditions, it is interesting to point out that the painting of Charles the Bold, with architectural elements, composition of the angel, and Charles' bright blue clothing, it is not dissimilar to those elements in the *Annunciation to the Virgin Mary* in the Hours of Mary of Burgundy.<sup>44</sup>

Also of note is a representation of a pea plant in the margins of the Book of Hours for Philip IV the Handsome made between 1490 and 1500 (Figure 3.29). in the middle of the Hours of the Virgin in the Book of Hours. Philip was the son of Mary of Burgundy and when he married Joanna I, Queen of Castile and Aragon, the daughter of the famous Ferdinand II and Isabella I, he became Philip I of Castile. This marginal pea plant is quite similar to the rest, with leaves, two pods, and three pink flowers in varying stages of growth. Instead of a monkey next to the plant there is a snail, a common insect included in the marginalia along with moths, butterflies, and other insects.

It is interesting that Joanna's Book of Hours has strikingly similar monkeys compared to the ones in Mary's Book of Hours, among other representations of monkeys doing other things, such as peering into mirrors, pulling carts, or just jumping. In addition to the monkeys, there are

---

<sup>44</sup> The Prayer Book of Charles the Bold also has a painting of the Martyrdom of Saint Catherine, where she is represented similarly to the Virgin Mary with a crown and a bright blue robe. It is also interesting that there are two monkeys in the margins fighting soldiers.

a number of other animals from the zodiac cycle in the Mary of Burgundy Hours represented similarly in Joanna's Hours, although they are not clearly tied to the zodiac cycle and are instead spread through the pages of text. Whether or not the master of both manuscripts were the same, knew each other, or worked in the same workshop or town, it speaks to the common artistic representation of animals and associated symbolism. The pea plant was not forgotten in Joanna's Hours either, although it is much smaller than other representations. The small scale emphasizes the important parts of the plant, the pod, the vine, and the pink and white flower (Figure 3.30). The plant is still able to function as a subtle reminder to the reader to likely think about fertility, the Virgin Mary, and ideas about purity.

Matilda of Hesse, the wife of John II, Duke of Cleves, nephew of Catherine of Cleves, also had an ornate Hours commissioned and eventually passed down to her granddaughter, Sibylle of Cleves (Figure 3.31). Sibylle was the sister of Anne of Cleves, and married John Frederick I, Elector of Saxony<sup>45</sup> and apparently had a loving relationship.<sup>46</sup> Sibylle's hours like many of the others includes an illustration of the Annunciation and a pea plant, along with other typical flowers, in the margin. The pea plant is to the left of the Virgin in the margins, with a number of vines and leaves, with three peapods and four white-pink flowers.<sup>47</sup>

\*

While pea plants were depicted near Mary and Christ in a number of manuscripts, paintings also made the association between the two clear. Rosemarie Bergmann draws specific attention to a few portraits of Mary with Infant Christ, holding a pea flower with pods (Figure 3.32). She notes possible influence from Greek byzantine icon portraits, although it is mostly

---

<sup>45</sup> While he was imprisoned by Charles the V, ultimately solved by the Capitulation of Wittenberg, he sought to establish the humanist University of Jena.

<sup>46</sup> Bavarian State Library, Munich, Germany

<sup>47</sup>

<https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/mechthild-of-hessen%E2%80%99s-prayer-book-so-called-prayer-book-of-the-princess-sibylle-von-kleve/QgHSyXa62ajmWA>

done in the contemporary German style of the early fifteenth century. In the portrait, Mary is looking lovingly at the Infant Christ in her arms, who is actually a cute baby in this painting, with one hand supporting his body and the other holding a small pea flower sprig. Like the botanical illustrations of the plant, it seems to have combined multiple stages of growth into one perfect plant, representing Christ and the Virgin. It has three bloomed flowers, small leaves, and three peapods of increasing size. One peapod is shown in profile, one at a slight angle, and the last one is also at a slight angle, but has burst open to reveal at least four peas within the pod. There are a number of angels behind Mary, although it is clear that the main focus of the painting is on Mary, the Infant Christ, and the pea plant, referencing both the purity and fertility of Mary.

Although prayer books were much easier to produce during this period, they were still made at a relatively small scale, generally around ten centimeters wide and fifteen tall. The small size of the books made them easily transportable, but also limited the size of the paintings within. Still, the manuscript illuminators were able to create incredibly rich manuscript pages on a remarkably small scale. Miniaturization was not uncommon in the late medieval period and was increasingly of interest following the Gothic gigantism of the thirteenth century. Attention to detail was important for artists at the time to engage the viewer for long periods of time, seen in carvings, engravings, paintings, and mosaics, to name a few. Like the magnifying glass was useful for boxwood carvings, oil paint was as influential if not more for creating smaller details with more precision, like in Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait* (Figure 3.33). While the main subject of the painting is the Arnolfini couple, van Eyck has included himself in the portrait and among other details that emphasize his incredible skill. On the wall behind the couple there is a convex mirror with an ornate frame of roundels with ten miniature scenes from the Passion,

which, from a distance, the viewer can barely tell there is any decoration around the mirror (Figure 3.34).

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, close looking was incredibly important for the appreciation of paintings in their entirety as more details were able to be included, and as scientific illustrations became more popular and emphasized depicting things as close to nature as possible. While this portrait was likely in a private setting, it shows a palpable interest in creating miniature details so that the viewer is forced to come into close proximity with the object and develop a more intimate relationship.

Throughout the early modern period, scientific and botanical illustrations, often combined into books, gained massive popularity, especially after the invention of the printing press. Secular works like herbariums and pattern books both disseminated knowledge about their subjects, and how they looked, such as plants and animals, with relative accuracy. Secular representations of plants still might have played a part in the creation of religious works, such as Books of Hours, as many flowering plants were included in the margins of them. Even so, less religious works, such as the Tudor Pattern Book, might have been inspired to organize the plants and animals symbolically in ways that the medieval viewer would recognize.

This exploration of representations of pea plants and pods throughout illuminated manuscripts establish a sense of the prevalence of pea images, particularly in the devotional context of lavishly illuminated Books of Hours produced in the Netherlands during the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries. We see from this survey that the owners of these books were both men and women and that the motif of peas comes up most often in connection with the Virgin Mary, where it symbolized her fertility and purity. For this symbolism, the practice of including in the image of the pea plant both flowers and fully-formed pods lent itself to the dual



and seemingly contradictory status of Mary as pure virgin (flower) and fertile mother (pod). The marginalia of manuscripts are a fruitful place to look for symbolic associations as they are meant to draw the medieval readers' eyes away from the text and to consider associations with what they see in the margins. The abundance of pea plants in the margins also shows how a plant of everyday use became an intriguing devotional symbol. Through the known owners of these manuscripts and the potential workshop connections in their production, we also begin to see the social and artistic networks that propagated a motif through the visual possessions of an elite group of nobles.

## CHAPTER IV

### *Netherlandish Boxwood Carvings*

Now that we have established an understanding of what pea plants were used for and how they were represented in Netherlandish manuscripts in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, it is also important to establish an understanding of the material that the carved pea pods are made out of: boxwood. Miniature boxwood carvings, most often in the shape of prayer beads or pomander balls, were a unique group of Netherlandish devotional objects, created almost entirely between 1500 and 1530. Of the limited surviving group – less than 150 in total survive – have been attributed to the workshop of Adam Dircksz. Among this collection of boxwood objects there are just two in the shape of pea pods: one outfitted with five separate openable peas, attributed to Dircksz's workshop (Figure 4.1); the other that opens to display two low relief scenes one side on each of the pod (Figure 4.2).

There has been a small but growing corner of scholarship on boxwood carvings, with many scholars referring to Jaap Leeuwenberg's publications in the 1960s and '70s as seminal works for the subject. Leeuwenberg was not the first to notice the boxwood carvings however, with the earliest known description of a boxwood prayer bead found in a manuscript written in 1633 by Joost van Cranevelt.<sup>48</sup> His essay explores the prayer bead in detail, covering the four scenes from the life of Mary Magdalene, and notably describing the prayer bead as "the most magnificent of all to behold, and also the most curious to behold."<sup>49</sup> Earlier, in 1930, Henri G. Marceau wrote on boxwood sculpture, and noted that the abundance of boxwood objects in the shape of everyday items attests to "the thought given in the past to making the objects of daily

---

<sup>48</sup> Van Cranevelt, "Appendix: Description of an Ingenious Apple," in *Small Wonders*, 558.

<sup>49</sup> Van Cranevelt, 593.

life beautiful as well as useful.” Boxwood was used to create combs, candlesticks, pipes, knife handles, statuettes, and chess pieces among a number of other items. In addition to these functional objects, boxwood was also used for private devotional objects including prayer beads, *memento mori*, rosaries, and miniature altarpieces. Like books of hours, prayer beads were sometimes gifted for special occasions such as marriages or births.<sup>50</sup>

Boxwood trees grow throughout England, France, and parts of southern Europe,<sup>51</sup> though most of the boxwood used for the carvings came from Picardy and Normandy.<sup>52</sup> Boxwood trees grow relatively slowly and evenly throughout the seasons, which creates a dense wood with a fine grain and even texture, making it an excellent wood for carving.<sup>53</sup> It has been used for both carvings and in their natural tree form as decorative shrubs in gardens (Figure 4.3) for thousands of years, with historical figures from Pliny to George Washington having used them for decoration.<sup>54</sup> Boxwood is an evergreen and grows through the winter when other plants die off. In Greek antiquity the box tree was associated with Pluto, the protector of evergreens, symbolic of regeneration and rebirth, as well as Venus, the goddess of love.<sup>55</sup>

In ancient Greece and Rome, the box tree was associated with the mother and fertility goddess Cybele. In Greek mythology Cybele was considered equivalent to the Olympian mother goddess Rhea and the cult of Cybele gained traction in Rome during the second century BCE. After a brief ban, cult celebrations were allowed again under Emperor Claudius, who reigned from 41 to 54 CE, adding the Spring Festival of Cybele and Attis to the Roman calendar.<sup>56</sup> Her inclusion as a Trojan deity required a name change to “Great Mother of Mount Ida,” canonized

---

<sup>50</sup> Suda and Boehm, “Handpicked: Collecting Boxwood Carvings from the Sixteenth to the Twenty-First Centuries,” 347.

<sup>51</sup> Marceau, “Boxwood Sculpture,” 19.

<sup>52</sup> Scholten, “The Boxwood Carvers of the Late Gothic Netherlands,” in *Small Wonders*, 23.

<sup>53</sup> Dandridge and Ellis, “Workshop Practices,” in *Small Wonders*, 518.

<sup>54</sup> Marceau, “Boxwood Sculpture,” 19.

<sup>55</sup> Marceau, 19.

<sup>56</sup> “Cybele - Livius.”

in mythology by multiple poets, including, most notably, Homer in the *Iliad*. Greeks in particular identified her with Aphrodite, especially in the Trojan War,<sup>57</sup> and as the mother of Aeneas from the *Aeneid* from the first century BCE. Cybele was the goddess of regeneration and resurrection, with celebrations taking place near the spring equinox, where initiation rites took place that involved bread and wine. As the cult continued, Christianity gained more popularity and the two challenged each other more often, with the cult only surviving into the early fifth century.<sup>58</sup>

In *The Compendium of Symbolic and Ritual Plants in Europe*, Marcel de Cleene provides a substantial amount of information on the symbolism of the box tree and boxwood. Cleene notes that medieval people in Flanders, Northern France, and western and southern Germany would take branches of box trees to make into their own version of palms for Palm Sunday.<sup>59</sup> Cleene claims that “The shrub was dedicated to Aphrodite/Venus, Cybele and Hades as a symbol of love, fertility and death, in other words the Box symbolizes the cycle of life.” Cleene explains that spoons and knife handles carved from boxwood were believed to repel the devil, similarly to rosaries. Most importantly, Cleene notes that “In Germany and Flanders, rosaries, spoons and knife handles made from box wood had the reputation of removing the desire for indecency, which was actually inspired by the devil. Lecherous people also carried it with them, in the hope that their desires might be tempered. If they were still troubled by their lust then they had the additional possibility of drinking box tea (dangerous).”<sup>60</sup> Box has a long history throughout multiple cultures and centuries, symbolic of fertility, eternal life, resurrection, and death.<sup>61</sup> The personal boxwood objects could have been used to ward of lecherous thoughts, but, as *Small Wonders* emphasizes, the large group of miniature boxwood prayer beads from the early

---

<sup>57</sup> Wilhelm, “Cybele: The Great Mother of Augustan Order.”

<sup>58</sup> Cleene and Lejeune, *Compendium of Symbolic and Ritual Plants in Europe*, 2002, 1:165.

<sup>59</sup> Cleene and Lejeune, 1:166.

<sup>60</sup> Cleene and Lejeune, 1:174.

<sup>61</sup> I have not been able to access the sources Cleene cites for the claims about desire and lechery.

sixteenth century seemed to be used more as aids for personal devotion, with the ability to be shown off in public as a display of wealth, either attached to their rosary or belt, like the rosary seen in the book of hours of Mary of Burgundy (Figure 4.4).

Beyond its mention and use in the ancient world, boxwood acquired further symbolic associations in Christianity. Throughout history boxwood has been mistakenly referred to as palm wood according to medieval sources, possibly explained by its use in place of palm wood in Northern Europe, that also claim that Christ's cross was made from palm wood,<sup>62</sup> giving it a strong association with the Holy Land. In addition to boxwood's direct connection to Christ, it was also mentioned in the Latin Bible of the medieval period by the prophet Isaiah, "The glory of Lebanon shall come to thee, the fir tree, and the box tree, and the pine tree together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary: and I will glorify the place of my feet,"<sup>63</sup> cementing its place in Christian rhetoric and its aesthetically captivating nature. Additionally, a book first published in 1502 by Johann Tollat of Vochenberg claims that boxwood "drives out the devil too, so that he can have no place in the house, and therefore Platearius says one should bless [the house] on Palm Sunday."<sup>64</sup> Tollat, an early humanist, references Platerius, a twelfth century physician, to emphasize boxwood's positive and protective use within Christianity.

While boxwood had long been known and appreciated in medieval Europe, scholars have assigned its sudden importance in the early sixteenth century as an effect of Ottoman conquests in North Africa that made ivory harder to obtain.<sup>65</sup> Due to the fine grain of boxwood, it was able to easily fill the gap that ivory left as a carving medium for religious objects since the start of Christianity. The craftsmen working with boxwood followed similar compositions seen in ivory,

---

<sup>62</sup> Scholten, "A Prayer Nut in a Silver Housing by 'Adam Dirckz,'" 332.

<sup>63</sup> "What Is Boxwood? | The Boxwood Project."

<sup>64</sup> "What Is Boxwood? | The Boxwood Project."

<sup>65</sup> Spicer, "Miniature Mysteries: New Proposals on the Handling, Creation, and Authentication of Late Medieval Prayer Nuts," 84.

both in small devotional objects and larger altarpieces. Similarities between boxwood and ivory objects can be especially clear when comparing miniature diptychs, and even more so, as Joaneath Spicer notes, in the ivory *Paternoster Bead with the Faces of a Young Woman, Death, and Christ* (Figure 4.5) and the boxwood *Prayer Bead in the Shape of the Head of the Virgin* (Figure 4.6).<sup>66</sup> Though not as exotic as ivory, boxwood fulfilled the need for an expensive medium to create religious devotional objects, which were made even more powerful through boxwoods well known connection to Christianity.

The slow growth of boxwood limited the size of the trees and the size of the objects carved from it. The confinement to small scale creations could have been a hindrance to some, but from roughly 1500 to 1530, a number of workshops operating in the Netherlands excelled in carving small objects out of boxwood. While there were only a handful of workshops operating in the low countries that created these spectacular carvings, a large number of the surviving carvings have been assigned to the workshop of Adam Dircksz, near Guelders or Utrecht.<sup>67</sup> Boxwood's associations with Christianity and the incredible control and skill of the carvers allowed for the creation of devotional objects such as rosaries (Figure 4.7) and miniature altarpieces (Figure 4.8), though the majority of what the workshops seem to have made were compositionally complex, miniature biblical narratives complete with an elaborately carved and ornamental gothic exterior (Figure 4.9).

To create such sophisticated exteriors and interiors required extreme care and precision from the carvers. After the wood was shipped to the Netherlands from France, it was carved and shaped by skilled turners by using drills, pole lathes, scrapers, and chisels.<sup>68</sup> A surviving set of tools used by the seventeenth century Italian micro-carver Ottaviano Jannella provides an idea of

---

<sup>66</sup> Spicer, 84.

<sup>67</sup> Scholten, "The Boxwood Carvers of the Late Gothic Netherlands," 24.

<sup>68</sup> "Workshop Practices," 530.

the tools that would have been used in the Netherlands (Figure 4.10).<sup>69</sup> The turners would first hollow out small hemispheres of wood, and then take the hollowed out interiors and create shelves within them to allow for multiple layers of carved relief pieces to be neatly seated within each other. To create such intricate and small scenes in the prayer beads, the expert carvers would carve details of the scenes on separate pieces that would be placed into the shells, and held together by small pegs or wood glue (Figure 4.11) . Technical studies spearheaded by Lisa Ellis for the Small Wonders exhibit were able to reveal even more about the prayer beads creation through micro-CT scans and 3D analysis software (Figure 4.12). The scans were unfortunately limited to a small number of prayer beads due to time constraints, but still unearth hidden secrets, such as numbers etched onto the back of the separate pieces of a prayer bead, attached to the rosary, to ensure that it would be properly assembled.<sup>70</sup>

\*

These miniature devotional items would have been quite expensive due to the incredible time and skill that it would have taken to create them, as well as the material value of boxwood. Given their limited market, the prayer beads would have been made for members of the clergy and the wealthy, religious, patrons of art in the Netherlands.<sup>71</sup> As Scholten notes, these items were made for private, devotional use, especially popular in the Netherlands as the *Devotio Moderna* religious movement was thriving.<sup>72</sup> The *Devotio Moderna*, or Modern Devotion, was a religious movement in the Roman Catholic Church, starting in the fourteenth century and became widespread throughout north-western Europe in the fifteenth century.<sup>73</sup> Geert Grote was a Dutch cleric and leading supporter of the *Devotio Moderna*, who translated and published a

---

<sup>69</sup> “Workshop Practices,” 554.

<sup>70</sup> Ellis et al., “Technology for Technology’s Sake: The Technical Study of Gothic Miniature Boxwood Carvings in the Thomson Collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario.,” 97.

<sup>71</sup> Scholten, “The Boxwood Carvers of the Late Gothic Netherlands,” 71.

<sup>72</sup> “The Boxwood Carvers of the Late Gothic Netherlands,” 36.

<sup>73</sup> Scholten, “The Boxwood Carvers of the Late Gothic Netherlands,” 36.

Dutch vernacular version of the Book of Hours, and became one of the most popular late medieval prayer books. Grote's translation was used in numerous manuscripts and books of hours throughout the Netherlands. The Grote and the *Devotio Moderna* encouraged active, individual, and private experiences of faith, such as reading and writing, which was further enhanced by the material and tactile addition of personal devotional objects.<sup>74</sup>

The miniature prayer beads as personal devotional objects seem to have emerged predominately out of two established forms of worship, carved altarpieces and rosaries. The miniature altarpieces greatly resemble the full scale altarpieces and retables seen in churches and cathedrals at the time, particularly those carved in the Netherlands and exported to sites throughout Europe in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century.<sup>75</sup> The altarpieces depicted a limited number of stories and characters from the Bible, the scenes from altar to altar were quite varied from each other.<sup>76</sup> Like the larger altarpieces, the miniature boxwood altarpieces and prayer beads represented Marian and Christological scenes, with as much detail and variation as the larger pieces. Paternoster beads are the largest and often final bead on a rosary and the last one held while reciting the Lord's Prayer, the Pater Noster.<sup>77</sup> The inclusion of the paternosters at the bottom of these triptych altarpieces speaks to a knowledge and market of both, enough so that they were incorporated into one, as well as highly valued individually.

The small size of the individual prayer beads, usually no more than six centimeters in diameter, or ones even attached to full rosaries, could have been carried or attached to the users belts as a symbol of their religiosity, but also to display their luxury item that would have only been accessible to the wealthy.<sup>78</sup> For the more detailed, and thus more expensive, prayer beads,

---

<sup>74</sup> Scholten, 36.

<sup>75</sup> "The Making of Gothic Boxwood Miniatures | The Boxwood Project."

<sup>76</sup> Dandridge and Ellis, "Workshop Practices," 514.

<sup>77</sup> Wixom, "A Brabantine Boxwood Triptych," 42.

<sup>78</sup> Scholten, "The Boxwood Carvers of the Late Gothic Netherlands," 36.



their use might have been limited to times of prayer where they could be delicately held and examined, and at other times carefully stored in boxes or cases.<sup>79</sup>

Miniature boxwood carvings have also been connected to the collections of royals throughout northern Europe. Margaret of Austria (1480-1530), daughter of Mary of Burgundy and Maximilian I the Holy Roman Emperor, and was governor of the Netherlands from 1507 until 1530. There is an ornate, carved letter ‘M’ (Figure 4.13), likely made for Margret as it represents the Life of Saint Margaret. The style of the carving has led it to be attributed to the workshop of Adam Dircksz, and was likely housed in her *petit cabinet*, a small room that was her precursor version of a curiosity cabinet where she kept “costly, exotic and artistically valuable little objects.”<sup>80</sup>

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, *Kunst- und Wunderkammern*, or cabinets of curiosities, were an increasingly popular approach to collecting small, exotic objects (Figure 4.14).<sup>81</sup> The increased popularity of collecting coincided with the rise of colonialism and consequent flood of new plants and animals that had never been seen in Europe before. Curiosity collections could include real specimens, pressed, pinned or taxidermied. Facsimiles of the real, such as paintings or drawings were also accepted alongside natural objects, *naturalia*. Curiosity cabinets would have also housed *artificialia*, objects made by human hands, that could have included miniature boxwood carvings. Boxwood carvings have been found in a number curiosity cabinets, most notably in the extensive collection of Margaret of Austria,<sup>82</sup> and in 1633, Johnkheer Joost van Cranevelt wrote a roughly twenty-page description and appreciation of his boxwood carving,<sup>83</sup> cementing its place in his and others collections as a wonder to behold.

---

<sup>79</sup> Dandridge and Ellis, “Workshop Practices,” 569.

<sup>80</sup> Scholten, “The Boxwood Carvers of the Late Gothic Netherlands,” 68.

<sup>81</sup> Scholten, “A Prayer Nut in a Silver Housing by ‘Adam Dirckz,’” 337.

<sup>82</sup> Reesing, “Patronage and Early Ownership of Sixteenth-Century Micro-Carvings from the Northern Netherlands,” 248.

<sup>83</sup> Van Cranevelt, “Appendix: Description of an Ingenius Apple,” 588.

Another prayer bead was also found in the collection of Mencía de Mendoza, a known patron of the arts and wife of Henry III of Nassau-Breda, who worked under a number of Burgundian rulers such as Philip the Handsome, Maximilian I, Margaret of Austria, and Charles V.

There is also a carved Netherlandish, openable letter 'P,' that was likely made for Philip IV the Handsome, Margaret of Austria's brother and a patron of Netherlandish art and music, as it depicted the Legend of Saint Philip (Figure 4.15). It also seems possible that it could have been made for Margaret of Austria's husband Philibert of Savoy, as the Savoy line is saturated with Philips. Similarly, a carved 'F' (Figure 4.16), also attributed to Dircksz, could have also been made for Philibert of Savoy<sup>84</sup> although it is more likely to have been made for King Francis I of France (1494-1547) as a diplomatic gift from the Netherlands.<sup>85</sup> This could have been possible, as Margaret and Philibert cultivated a thriving art culture in the Netherlands, and Philibert was related to Francis I through his grandfather and Francis's great grandfather, Louis, Duke of Savoy (1413-1465).

One of the complex boxwood rosaries (Figure 4.7) is also believed to have been made for King Henry VIII of England and his first wife Catherine of Aragon due to the inscription of their initials and their likeness represented in figures within one of the scenes of the rosary beads.<sup>86</sup> The fact that there are still a handful of surviving prayer beads attributable to, or near, royalty, attests to the wide market and reach of the boxwood carvings. The prayer beads were smaller, often but not always, less personalized boxwood carvings that the aristocratic and newly wealthy classes in the Netherlands, along with nobility, would have been able to purchase and commission.

---

<sup>84</sup> Reesing, "Patronage and Early Ownership of Sixteenth-Century Micro-Carvings from the Northern Netherlands," 251.

<sup>85</sup> Reesing, 251.

<sup>86</sup> Suda and Boehm, "Handpicked: Collecting Boxwood Carvings from the Sixteenth to the Twenty-First Centuries," 347.

The users of the paternosters and miniature prayer beads would have opened them at the end of a prayer, as a revelation, to see the biblical narratives that were previously only visualized, in the palm of one's hand. Users were able to physically open, and, in the mind's eye,<sup>87</sup> walk through and recognize different scenes and characters from the Bible. Most prayer beads had extensive gothic ornament on their exteriors (Figure 4.9), which would have made for an engaging, easily traceable, and likely calming, tactile experience. If the user was compelled to, and they had a delicate enough hand, they could have even felt the carved scenes on the interior.

Opening and taking in every detail of the prayer beads on a daily basis for prayer, would have given the users ample opportunities to consider how these items were created, and the skill required to do so because of their miniature scale. The miniature scale of the scenes would have made them awe-inspiring, as well as difficult to discern at the same time, even with perfect eyesight and ample light. The boxwood carvers would have used spectacles or magnifying glasses made of quartz, suggested in the fact that Ottaviano Jannella's toolkit also included a pair of glasses (Figure 4.17).<sup>88</sup>

Italian micro carver Ottaviano Jannella (1635-1661) could be seen as a descendant of the Dutch microcarvers, although it seems more likely that he would have been inspired by the work of Italian sculptor Properzia de' Rossi, the only woman to be mentioned in Vasari's publication of the *Lives of the Artists*, one of the seminal texts for art history. Jannella would have been able to draw inspiration from numerous artists, leading to the creation of incredibly refined and detailed miniature carvings, that, compared to the boxwoods, have much more depth and dimension (Figure 4.18). In his short life, Jannella worked for Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, a known patron of the arts, and was offered but declined a position in the Tuscan court with the Medici family. Pope

---

<sup>87</sup> Scholten, "The Boxwood Carvers of the Late Gothic Netherlands," 24.

<sup>88</sup> Dandridge and Ellis, "Workshop Practices," 554.

Alexander VII also expressed interest in meeting Jannella and seeing his work, but Jannella passed away before he could show the Pope his work, much like Rossi passed before being able to meet Pope Clement VII.<sup>89</sup>

It is also interesting to note Rossi's sculpture of *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*, made for the Cathedral of Bologna in the 1520s, that clearly emphasizes the seductress aspect of Potiphar's wife (Figure 4.19). While Dutch artists had increasing access and knowledge of Italian artistic practices, it does not seem that this depiction of Joseph would have specifically influenced the depiction found in the second peapod. Rossi's relief does however speak to a growing interest at the turn of the century in the story of Joseph fleeing Potiphar's Wife and his chastity.

One prayer bead with a silver exterior was stored in a box that also had a drawer for a magnifying glass, even more directly supporting the need for magnification to examine these creations (Figure 4.20).<sup>90</sup> This prayer bead depicts an interesting aristotelian interpretation of elements and animals. On one half of the case there are personifications of each element (fire, earth, water, air), as well as a nude woman (Figure 4.21), and on the other half there are four animals across from the personifications, and a monkey opposite the nude woman (Figure 4.22). While the monkey is not caged, it does have a collar that implies its lack of freedom, representative of its sinful nature, directly opposed to the fertility that the nude woman is motioning towards with her hands.

This prayer bead with silver casing would have been quite expensive because of its elaborately engraved case, only a few other prayer beads have been found with surviving silver cases or various levels of detail, and less detailed cases made of leather. This case is particularly interesting because it is concerned with the elements of nature and animals, whereas other prayer

---

<sup>89</sup> Levy, "Ottaviano Jannella: Micro-Sculptor in the Age of the Microscope," 422.

<sup>90</sup> Scholten, "A Prayer Nut in a Silver Housing by 'Adam Dirckz,'" 324.

beads have exteriors decorated with scenes from the Passion of Christ or specific Saints. This prayer bead speaks not only to the combined artistic abilities of the makers of these objects, and possibly the extent of goldsmithing and engraving skills available in one workshop, or the collaboration between workshops and artists to create such intricate pieces.

It is also interesting to consider for a moment the possible patron of this piece, as the narratives depicted within are the Nativity (top) and the Adoration of the Magi (bottom) (Figure 4.23). If prayer beads were made to mark occasions such as marriages and births, it seems possible that this might have been made just for that purpose. The prayer beads interior is almost fully focused on Mary and the Infant Christ, something new mothers would be able to see themselves in. The silver casing of the bead is more difficult to connect to a woman's use as directly, but it is interesting that the exterior is concerned with the way nature works, and clearly assigns women as being part of nature. A significant amount of the surviving prayer beads focus on the Nativity and Adoration, or include one of the scenes along one from the Passion. The emphasis on these two narratives might imply that they were made for or commissioned by wealthy women, and that celebrations and references to fertility were quite common.

The mathematical precision required to successfully create the gothic exteriors would have further cemented the divine nature and content of the objects, as well as their creators. Throughout the Middle Ages certain geometric shapes were considered divine gifts from god, with the sphere and circle considered the most perfect.<sup>91</sup> The exterior gothic ornament was created by a pattern of concentric overlapping circles, which would have reminded the user of larger gothic architecture seen in churches, through both direct miniaturization and representation of the architectural elements, or through abstraction of the mathematical curves found in gothic decoration. The boxwood carvers, in creating a spherical object out of

---

<sup>91</sup> Kavalier, "Prayer Nuts and Early Modern Sculpture in the Netherlands," 180.

overlapping circles, were intrinsically linked to and associated with divine shapes and considered divine artists.<sup>92</sup> Later, micro-carver Ottaviano Jannella was described as a divine artist and *ingegno*, genius,<sup>93</sup> representative of the appreciation of artists abilities.

\*

Prayer beads also had the opportunity to engage other senses beyond vision and touch. While prayer beads were often attached to rosaries, pomanders were also a common addition to the ends of rosaries to enhance the experience of prayer through smell, and are stylistically quite similar. Spherical objects were often called apples in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, *pommes d'ambre* (apples of amber) in French, that was then evolved into *pomander* in Dutch and English.<sup>94</sup> Pomanders were hung on rosaries, belts, and other clothing items, often made of metal, shaped into spheres with perforations (Figure 4.24) that contained sweet-smelling fragrances believed to have protected the user from illness and evil forces.<sup>95</sup>

Worshippers with access to less elaborate devotional objects also created their own rosaries and pomander beads, made out of a mixture of sweet-swelling materials and rosin, a resin from pine trees that resembles amber, that would have smelled similar to the incense burned in Catholic churches.<sup>96</sup> While there is no definite evidence that fragrances were applied to the boxwood prayer beads, the presence of pierced rosettes and open tracery suggests that it was more than possible to use the prayer beads as pomanders to enhance personal prayer. Even so, without added perfumes, boxwood was a wood known for its pleasant smell, one of its favorable qualities. For a more thorough exploration of the senses in late medieval piety, Reindert

---

<sup>92</sup> Levy, "Ottaviano Jannella: Micro-Sculptor in the Age of the Microscope," 428.

<sup>93</sup> Levy, 428.

<sup>94</sup> Scholten, "The Boxwood Carvers of the Late Gothic Netherlands," 16.

<sup>95</sup> Falkenburg, "Prayer Nuts Seen through the 'Eyes of the Heart,'" 117.

<sup>96</sup> Falkenburg, "Toys for the Soul: Prayer-Nuts and Pomanders in Late Medieval Devotion," 36.

Falkenburg, Frits Scholten, and Susan Stewart have a number of articles that delve into how much smell and touch are entwined in creating a richer religious and meditative experience.

Pomanders and rosaries were also deeply connected to plant allusions and the “garden of the soul,” as Falkenburg describes it, from the poetry of Solomon’s Song of Songs.<sup>97</sup> The poetry describes the metaphorical and sensual love-union of a bride and groom that takes place within a garden, and evokes garden imagery. Falkenburg also notes that the “various plants that grow in this garden relate to the bodies, or parts of the bodies,” more specifically to the womb of the bride, and that medieval theology made use of this to represent the union between “divinity and humanity at the moment of Christ’s ‘incarnation’ in the Virgin Mary.”<sup>98</sup> The garden of the soul was used to metaphorically represent the virtues that worshippers could cultivate and contemplate. Countless plants part of everyday life possessed hidden significance in Christian contexts. James Marrow noted how plant forms in the margins of manuscripts often served as symbols that reinforced meanings in the text and illustration, as well as referencing ideas outside of the subject of the page but still important for contemplation.

The artists and patrons clearly saw similarities between the prayer beads and pomanders and similarly shaped foods, such as apples or nuts. While this can be seen in descriptions of the beads, with Cranevelt calling it an “ingenious apple,”<sup>99</sup> A more obvious association can be seen in a prayer bead that has an exterior shaped like that of a walnut. The interior scenes depict two narratives of David that are unique as they are unseen in any of the other prayer beads. The even more intriguing aspect of the prayer bead is its exterior that has been carved naturalistically to look almost exactly like a real walnut. Most other prayer beads exteriors are made up of overlapping gothic tracery, or are left smooth and placed into a case.

---

<sup>97</sup> “Toys for the Soul: Prayer-Nuts and Pomanders in Late Medieval Devotion,” 34.

<sup>98</sup> “Toys for the Soul: Prayer-Nuts and Pomanders in Late Medieval Devotion,” 33.

<sup>99</sup> Scholten, “The Boxwood Carvers of the Late Gothic Netherlands,” 13.

The walnut exterior was likely inspired by walnuts and hazelnuts that were a staple food in many medieval European diets. The nut shape might also be referential to the expression “in a nutshell,” although it was only documented from the late sixteenth century onwards.<sup>100</sup> Scholten has assigned the walnuts creation to an artist or workshop copying the work of the Dircksz workshop, with noticeably less experienced methods for carving, but still incredibly impressive.<sup>101</sup> It is interesting to note that this prayer bead also comes with a smooth silver case to protect the naturalistic carving further. The existence of three prayer beads in the shape of edible foods emphasizes a connection made by late medieval practitioners between the natural world, created by God, and their own piety, both reinforced by the objects.

Before the peapods were even carved, they had an established association to ideas of rebirth with the material they were carved from: boxwood, similarly expensive to ivory with similar carving properties. Much of the amazement from both sixteenth and twenty-first century viewers comes from the sheer scale of the carvings and the technical expertise. As devotional aids, boxwood carvings could serve as tactile reminders of biblical narratives, while also having a pleasant smell, either from the wood itself or an added pomander fragrance. Other prayer beads also indicate a market interested in symbolic and humanist ideas in addition to Christian narratives and morals. The carved peapods are intriguing in both their exceptional shape and what is depicted within. Their small size, making them easily portable, gave users the ability to take the peapods with them to compare to real life examples. Once there, they could open the peapods and meditate on Biblical narratives within. Additionally, the abundance of pea flowers and peapods in the margins of manuscripts makes it possible that the owners of the wooden

---

<sup>100</sup> Scholten, “Immersive Play: Perception and Use of Small Devotionalia in the Late Middle Ages,” 153.

<sup>101</sup> Scholten, “The Boxwood Carvers of the Late Gothic Netherlands,” 52.



peapods could have owned a book of hours, print, or painting of peapods in some form in their collection.

## CHAPTER V

### *Two Carved Peapods*

Two thought-provoking examples in the collection of boxwood carvings are in the shape of a peapod, found on the Art Gallery of Ontario's Boxwood Project website and individually housed in the Berlin Kunstgewerbemuseum and Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg. The small collection of miniature carved boxwood objects is largely made up of prayer beads, rosaries, and unique devotional objects, like prayer beads in the shape of letters or plants. The peapods were carved in a naturalistic style, remarkably similar to their real counterparts found in the garden. Both of the carved peapods originate from northern Germany, created at the turn of the sixteenth century.

An interesting technical detail about the information available about the first peapod is found in the Art Gallery of Ontario's attribution of the artist of the *Peapod with Ten Biblical Scenes* as just "North German,"<sup>102</sup> while the Kunstgewerbemuseum that houses the object assigns its creation to Adam Dircksz, likely referring to his workshop. The quality and finish of the peapod would be on par with the rest of the works from the Dircksz workshop, although the shape is nearly unprecedented compared to the surviving group of objects. A close examination of the ten biblical scenes and the same scenes in Dircksz production might yield further similarities.

While both carvings are easily recognizable as peapods, they do vary in artistic quality and skill. The peapod of higher quality undoubtedly required more artistic finesse, possibly attributed to Dircksz, but is easier to understand iconographically than the second. The first peapod has a polished exterior that can then be opened to reveal five small peas, each of which

---

<sup>102</sup> "Peapod with Ten Biblical Scenes | The Boxwood Project."

can be opened on its own as well to reveal minutely carved scenes (Figure 5.1). The second peapod is similar, but has a rougher, less polished exterior that opens to reveal two low relief scenes that fill each of the two sides, and are a little harder to understand iconographically (Figure 4.2).

The peapod has a polished exterior and is similar in size to its real counterpart, at only ten centimeters long and two centimeters wide. The exterior of the peapod also includes more subtle details that would appear on a real peapod, with slight indentations and bulges along the pod that would imply three to five large peas within. The peapod is also equipped with a perfectly looped stem that could have allowed it to be connected to accessories such as rosaries or belts and easily carried around. Whether or not the peapod was actively carried around, its use can be determined through its orientation, which places the stem at the bottom of the pea, rather than the top, which is easier to notice when the peapod and peas within are opened.

When the peapod is first opened, the user is met with a simple interior that has smooth sides and five small peas that are each able to be opened. Once opened, each pea reveals two scenes from the New Testament, but due to the limited scale the scenes had to be reduced to only a handful of details on each side. With the full length of the peapod only being ten centimeters, each peapod was roughly 1.5 centimeters across. This incredibly small scale of the peas would have either required the use of glasses or a magnifying glass, or, the more likely scenario, to bring the peapod extremely close to the eyes to be able to see the details. Due to the miniature scale, the figures within each scene are done mostly in low relief with limited subjects. Even so, the roughly hewn scenes each have a number of recognizable details.

The opened peas within the peapod show, from top to bottom: the Creation of Adam and the Annunciation to Mary, the Crucifixion and the Fall of Man, the Creation of Eve and the

Nativity, the Resurrection and the Expulsion, and, lastly, Adam and Eve before God and the Flight to Egypt, all of which were narratives depicted in prayer beads. Opening the prayer pod and the five peas individually could have acted as a rosary, where each pea was opened at the end of a recitation of Hail Marys. Aside from reciting prayers in conjunction with opening the peas, the user would have also been able to open the peas to reflect upon the scenes represented. Even with a good eye, the user would have had to strain to see the miniature representation within the peas, let alone decipher which biblical story it was specifically referring to, with only a few characters and objects in each . In this struggle to decipher the scenes, the user would have recalled any number of biblical narratives and the morals associated with them.

Like the majority of boxwood carvings, the peapod is not polychrome, and draws attention to the warm toned wood, and the smooth texture of the carving. While the interior of the peapod is largely the same color of wood, the exterior has slight variations in the darkness of wood, possibly implying wear caused by the user and the natural oils from their hand that actually help to polish the wood. The peapod could have been held in the hand with the stem at the bottom, opening the pod and then the individual peas while going over prayers essentially acting as a rosary.

The peapod could also be attached to someone's belt, like the woman's belt ornament in the right panel of the *Master of the St Bartholomew Altarpiece*. The master was originally from the Netherlands and later moved to Cologne, where he made the altarpiece between 1500 and 1510.<sup>103</sup> The right panel depicts Saint James the Less and Saint Christina with a patterned background, standing on a stone path before an area of grass and dirt (Figure 5.2). Like in many other depictions, St James is holding a fuller's club in one hand, used for agitating clothes for washing, and a book in his other hand. St Christina wears a gold and maroon dress and a green

---

<sup>103</sup> National Gallery of Art, "Master of the Saint Bartholomew Altar."

cape, with a maroon belt with two peapods attached and symbolically holds two arrows in her right hand.<sup>104</sup> It is possible that the ends of the belt were decoratively similar to having a rosary attached to your waist, and the peapod shape was a stylistic choice.

The two peapods on St Christina's belt seem to be the two ends of the belt tied together, and seem to be made from a warm metal, like brass or copper. The pods are split open to reveal nine or ten peas each, possibly made from metal or pearls. The boxwood peapod with five peas is not dissimilar from this belt decoration, instead made of wood and more functionally openable than the painted one. Of course, the two peapods on the altarpiece could equally be created by the artist as it could be copied from a real patron. The numerous amount of peas in the pods could be related to the East German belief that a pod containing nine or more peas had magical power and in Hungary, France, and Scotland they had power in predicting marriages.<sup>105</sup> The peapods in the altarpiece are also reminiscent of the ornate peapod decorations popular in France during the reign of Henri IV and Louis XIII during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

While the ornamental peapod style of early seventeenth century France cannot be directly tied to the carved boxwood peapods, it draws attention to the peapod's interesting ability to be elevated into high society. Peas entered and flourished in representation in court during the reign of Louis XIII (r. 1617 to 1643),<sup>106</sup> and were notably prepared "in a French manner" for his son, Louis XIV (r. 1643-1715).<sup>107</sup> The peapod had long been a staple food of the poor in France, and for seventeenth century goldsmiths in Paris the peapod form offered a fruitful area for artistic

---

<sup>104</sup> "St Christina | Glossary | National Gallery, London."

<sup>105</sup> Cleene and Lejeune, *Compendium of Symbolic and Ritual Plants in Europe*, 2002, 2:447.

<sup>106</sup> Henri IV of France married Marie de Medici, the granddaughter of Ferdinand I, Holy Roman Emperor. After Henri IV's death, Marie became regent for their child Louis, and developed a rich court supporting the arts. Marie helped arrange the marriage of her son Louis and daughter Elizabeth to Anne of Austria and Philip IV of Spain.

<sup>107</sup> Toussaint-Samat, *A History of Food*, 39.

expression and exploration, known as the *cosse de pois*.<sup>108</sup> The *cosse de pois* motif was largely explored in print form, although there are a number of expensive decorative objects and jewelry made in the style, which Marika Takanishi Knowles notes, “juxtapose an ordinary vegetable with the extraordinary support of gold jewelry.”<sup>109</sup> Knowles notes that the peapod during this period still alluded to fertility, as well as a symbol for renewal and France as a maternal body after the Wars of Religion,<sup>110</sup> and could have also been “an attractive ornament to nobles looking for an emblem of healthful fertility.”<sup>111</sup>

A prime example of the opulence of the *cosse de pois* style can be seen in a breast ornament made between 1620 and 1630.<sup>112</sup> More common were prints made by goldsmiths of peapod motifs that explored different styles, such as including gemstones (Figure 5.3), vegetal like manuscript margins (Figure 5.4), abstract peapod styles above etched landscapes (Figure 5.5), and even figures including or made of up the ornament (Figure 5.6). The surviving gold *cosse de pois* objects and prints are interesting to note as they exist roughly century after the carved peapods were made, making clear the association of peapods with fertility and artistic experimentation continued from the sixteenth century.

The second peapod is only 7.6 centimeters long, and has a more worn exterior compared to the first peapod. Though similar, the wood of the second peapod is darker than the first, and there seems to be more scratches and scuffs that imply its frequent use. The exterior also has darkened grooves that give the impression that there are five peas within the casing. Much like the other peapod, this one is quite similar to real peas in that it has a slightly curved stem at the bottom. Unfortunately the uneven lengths of the stem on each side implies there might have been

---

<sup>108</sup> Knowles, “Ornament in the Kitchen Garden,” 2.

<sup>109</sup> Knowles, 3.

<sup>110</sup> Knowles, 3.

<sup>111</sup> Knowles, 23.

<sup>112</sup> *Breast Ornament*.

more to the stem previously, possibly looking similar to the looped stem of the first pea. Further evidence that supports a more extensive stem is found in the fact that the scenes within the peapod are also oriented so that the stem is at the bottom.

Once the peapod is opened the user is not met with peas like the other peapod, but instead two highly detailed low relief scenes. If the first, “higher quality,” peapod is attributed to the workshop of Adam Dircksz, it seems possible that the second peapod came from a copycat workshop, as *Small Wonders* has already argued existed with Dircksz and other boxwood carvings. The second workshop might have seen the Dircksz peapod from afar, not knowing about the five peas within, or was someone shown the peapod and decided to opt for an easier carving. The survival of two wooden peapods from the early sixteenth century might speak to a larger market and existence of more peapod shaped objects that possibly no longer survive due to the Protestant Reformation and iconoclasm in the Netherlands during the late sixteenth century.

What first grabs the eye from the first scene in the second peapod is the woman seated in the bed, nude from the waist up, and wearing a headdress. Behind her is a pillow, and slightly in front of her are the rumpled blankets covering her lower half, and the coat that she has pulled off of the other figure, and what looks to be a chamber pot next to the bed. The man leaving her alone in bed is fully clothed, except for the cloak she has taken. His movement away from the woman is evident when looking at his legs, with one bent and the other one straight and moving forward, as well as the movement in his arms. Below the man's feet and above the stem of the pea, there is a small enclave that looks like a sewer or tunnel, with a monkey chained to the wall inside. Lastly, at the top of the scene, above the woman and the room's decorative architecture, a shield without any markings is hanging from the latching mechanism of the peapod.

The use of lines in this composition is also interesting and able to convey movement and feeling in a more subtle way. Above and behind the woman are the mostly horizontal and parallel lines that define the room, that are in stark contrast to the more disorganized lines of the unkempt blanket and their clothing. Below the bed there is a tiled floor that is diagonally angled, drawing attention to the seemingly diagonal movement of the man away from the woman, as well as drawing the user's attention towards the other half of the pea. Despite the chaotic composition found in the middle of the pea, the space below the floor with the monkey inside returns to the normal horizontal orientation of the room. The monkey is also separated from its surroundings through the use of the arch, similar to how the arch frames the woman's head above.

Following the diagonal lines of the floor to the second scene, one is met with an array of different figures outside the walls of a city. The most central figure of the scene, noticeable as everyone else in the scene is looking to him, is a man seated in front of a fountain, leaning on it with his left arm. His left arm is also supporting his head with closed eyes, implying that he has fallen asleep. In his right hand he is holding a long spear that rests on the ground next to his helmet and shield. In addition to his equipment, his protective clothing further suggests that he is a soldier or knight.

The other man standing in front of the lounging knight is not a soldier, but instead looks to be from the upper class, wearing a flowing robe and detailed hat, somewhat resembling a crown. He is looking down at the knight with an orb in his right hand and scepter in his left hand. Although it is difficult to make out such small details, he seems to have slightly raised eyebrows giving him a pensive look. His expression, tilted head, and extended hand all suggest that he is moving to interact with the knight. Just below the second man is a saddled horse, seen from a



vertical, aerial-like view, that is looking away from the scene beyond the peapod. Below the horse at the bottom of the peapod, a frog or toad sits nestled into a pile of rocks.

Returning to the middle and upper portions of the peapod, the knight is leaning against a square fountain, with a spiraling pillar in the center. It has three visible spouts and streams of water, presumably with a fourth on the backside, and a decorative object, possibly an animal, on the top of the fountain. Next to the fountain and above the second man there are three nude women standing in a small group, looking towards the lounging knight. All three women are completely nude and facing forward, with only their long hairstyles and arm placements to cover portions of their bodies. Although they are all naked, they are also not making any attempt to cover their bodies or show displeasure in their nakedness. All of the women in the peapod have their breasts almost completely exposed, even though the first woman is more pronounced, from either artistic choice or user wear. Additionally, it is interesting that the artist chose to include details of the women's pubic area for the group of women, but did not include said details on the singular woman.

The top third of the scene above the women shows a road through what looks like grass, but the wavy nature of the lines are also reminiscent of ocean waves, up towards a city's outside walls and gate. A small door is left open at the end of the path at the bottom of the gate. The top of the gate has ramparts and spires, as well as the building behind it. The last building looks similar to the other two buildings, although the larger and more squared off tower attached to it could indicate the building might be a church. Regardless, the gate, buildings, and protective wall indicate a populated city. Even further, there looks to be an open area with someone standing, or possibly kneeling, with their arms together in front of them, next to someone else looking at them from atop a horse.

Although the two scenes depict incredibly different moments, there are a few parallels that are difficult to ignore. Both scenes have a patterned horizontal divider; the left rooms circular and crosshatched ornamentation, and the ramparts of the gate and wall on the right side. On both sides, the women and men are placed in roughly the same position in the middle right and lower left of the scene respectively. Next to both of the men, the diagonal lines of the floor and of the spear lead to the hinge of the peapod and further, directly to the nude women. Lastly, like the other side, there is a small animal tucked away at the bottom of the peapod, facing towards the lounging knight.

\*

On the left and right respectively the scenes represent the biblical story of Joseph fleeing Potiphar's Wife, from the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament, and the Judgement of Paris from Greek mythology. The story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife originated in the Hebrew Bible, and with a similar version in the Christian Bible and Quran. Outside of the Christian Bible they are usually known as Yosef and Zuleikha, so I will sometimes refer to Potiphar's wife as Zuleikha. Like the names, the stories are only slightly different and emphasize the same moral of self-restraint.

In Genesis 37, Joseph was sold by the Midianites to Potiphar, the Pharaoh's captain of the guard. Joseph brought prosperity to those around him and was very useful for Potiphar. One day, Potiphar left Joseph to watch over everything he owned while he was away. While Potiphar was gone, his wife, Zuleikha, bid Joseph to sleep with her a number of times. Joseph refused her each time, stating he could not "sin against God." She tried to seduce him a final time while all household servants were outside, this time more aggressively, grabbing his cloak and pulling it off of him as he escaped. After Joseph left her, she called out to her servants that, "he hath

brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me,” with the cloak left in her hands as evidence.<sup>113</sup> When Potiphar returned, Zuleikha showed him the garment and accused Joseph, and Potiphar immediately sent him to prison. Although Joseph was sent to prison, he was still blessed by God and prospered there. Later, Zuleikha’s claim is proven wrong, and when the Pharaoh is tormented by dreams, Joseph is released to help him. The story of Joseph fleeing Potiphar’s wife is a traditional story of restraint and chastity in the face of a seductress.

The right side of the peapod depicts the Greek myth of the Judgement of Paris, mentioned in the *Iliad* and expanded upon in the *Cypria*. Traditionally, the story goes that while Paris, the Prince of Troy, was at a wedding, Eris, also known as Discordia in Latin, threw a golden apple into the party, claiming it was for the most beautiful woman there. An argument quickly broke out between Hera, Aphrodite, and Athena (Juno, Venus, and Minerva). To end the debate, Zeus (Mercury) gave Paris the golden apple and allowed him to decide. In addition to their beauty, each goddess offered Paris a bribe; Hera offered to make him the king of Europe and Asia, Athena offered him leadership and military wisdom, and Aphrodite offered him the most beautiful woman, Helen. Paris chooses Aphrodite as the most beautiful, and later she brings Helen to him, despite the fact that she was already married to Menelaus. The Trojan War followed Helen’s kidnapping, and is one of the most famous wars in history.

Greek society especially valued personal honor and achievements, and using those strengths to acquire a beautiful wife, clearly evident in the initial competition for Helen’s hand in marriage. Paris was not only offered honor without effort, but also the most sought after woman in all of the Mediterranean. Paris’ inability to control his passions and lust for Helen, led to ten years of hatred and war, full of countless avoidable deaths and disasters, and Paris being one of

---

<sup>113</sup> Genesis 39

the least likable characters involved in the myth. Opposed to the story of Joseph, about preserved chastity that is punished, the Judgement of Paris is about unworthiness rewarded.

The moment of Joseph fleeing Potiphar depicted on the left portion of the peapod follows the traditional way of representing the story, while also including a number of unique details. Like other paintings, Zuleikha has grabbed Joseph's cloak, and next to her bed what looks to be a chamber pot. While chamber pots were often a dirty but necessary part of everyday life across Europe, Dutch paintings in particular often associated chamber pots with female sexuality. Chamber pots were more likely to be used by men inside, in a corner or behind a curtain so that they weren't required to go outside. For women, the use of the chamber pot was often done in private, and was commonly stored next to or beneath the bed.<sup>114</sup> The chamber pots' close proximity to the bed meant they were often included in paintings of private rooms, and thus private matters. More generally, the interior of homes were often regarded as the woman's domain, especially the bedroom, as it was the place of "the marriage bed, the deathbed, and the birth bed,"<sup>115</sup> in addition to a private place to use the chamber pot. Thus, this glimpse into the bedroom could have been regarded as taboo, while still making sure to make the temptation of the seductress the more important issue.

Unlike other representations of Joseph fleeing, this depiction includes a monkey at the bottom of the scene. Although the monkey is separated from the bedroom by the horizontal band, it clearly has a special meaning related to the story. In medieval representations, monkeys usually represent the wild and base side of human nature, often as a symbol of sin. In other Dutch paintings that deal with the topic of women's sexuality, barking dogs are sometimes included to symbolize the "animalistic and out of control" nature of the woman's arousal. In the peapod, the

---

<sup>114</sup> D'Agostino, "Privy Business," 33.

<sup>115</sup> D'Agostino, 36.

monkey could symbolize the sinful nature of Potiphar's wife and her animalistic desires, or Joseph's desires and denial of them.

The animal could have also acted as a warning, as the sad, chained monkey would have shown that "sin results in slavery and sadness."<sup>116</sup> One of the most widely circulated images of monkeys in the low countries during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was from Albrecht Dürer's *Madonna and Child with the Monkey*.<sup>117</sup> Scholars have suggested that by placing the monkey next to the Madonna and Christ, it was meant to emphasize their opposite nature, the corrupt and the spiritual.<sup>118</sup> In the context of the peapod's scene, it seems most likely that the monkey would have referenced the base side of man and temptation that Joseph felt, while also threatening the punishment of being chained up or imprisoned if he gave into those pleasures.

In one of the more ornate boxwood monstresses, a monkey has been included in the scene in a similar manner.<sup>119</sup> In one of the many narratives depicted on the monstresse, a group of men are yelling on the stairs of a doorway or gate. Below the stairs and directly below Jesus, there's a dungeon-like room with a chained monkey sitting inside (Figure 5.7). Depending on the narrative, the monkey could be representative of any number of sins, but demonstrates the carvers association with monkeys and immoral action, prominent enough in their day to include in the carvings.

Historian Erika Kern has identified a number of associations that people would have had with monkeys in the medieval era. In her article, she draws attention to the satirical and allegorical aspects that might be seen in manuscript margins, with monkeys depicted doing activities humans might and even more so that "the monkey was seen as an imitator of other's

---

<sup>116</sup> Sullivan, "Peter Bruegel the Elder's Two Monkeys," 116.

<sup>117</sup> Sullivan, 116.

<sup>118</sup> Sullivan, 115.

<sup>119</sup> <http://wb.britishmuseum.org/MCN6655#29293001>

behavior. The Latin word for monkey (and ape) is “simius,” which shares the same root as the Latin word for resemblance, “similitudo.” Consequently, medieval manuscripts are filled with images of monkeys aping human behavior.”<sup>120</sup>

Additionally, stories about animals acting as humans would have been used for centuries to teach morals, like *Aesop's Fables*. While the fables had been circulating through oral and written tradition since the fifth century BCE, printed books including illustrations became available starting in 1461 in Northern Europe. While there are fables for almost every animal one could think of, a few stories about monkeys with interesting morals stand out. In *The Monkey and the Camel*, the monkey dances and the camel tries to copy him, although not as gracefully and offends the other animals. The camel is forced out of the desert and made into food, with the moral, “Do not try to ape your betters.”<sup>121</sup> Another fable, *The Monkeys and Their Mother*, tells of a monkey with two babies, one that she nurtures and one she neglects. She caressed the nurtured one so much that it was smothered and the other spited her from the neglect it endured, teaching to moral that, “The best intentions will not always ensure success.”<sup>122</sup> These fables, told for centuries, could have informed laypeople, artists, and patrons of such morals generally associated with monkeys outside of a purely religious context. In any case, the viewer of the peapod, in seeing the monkey, might have remembered the morals of the fables and connected them to the story of Joseph fleeing Potiphar's wife.

Lastly, and also not seen in other depictions of Joseph fleeing Potiphar's wife, is the shield hanging above the entire scene. Compared to the shield discarded on the other side, it might have represented his preserved chastity and chivalry, although this idea has not been thoroughly explored yet.

---

<sup>120</sup> Kern, “Quirky History.”

<sup>121</sup> “Library of Congress Aesop Fables.”

<sup>122</sup> DaBoss, “The Monkeys and Their Mother.”

Joseph fleeing Potiphar's wife was a popular scene to depict in paintings and carvings to both warn the viewer against sinful women, and provide them a glimpse of the seductress's body, in various states of undress throughout the century. Lucas van Leyden's print (Figure 5.8) has a few similarities with the depiction on the peapod, such as the chamber pot on the floor and the large headdress Zuleikha is wearing, although the one on the peapod could be a reference to what they think Egyptian headdresses looked like. This relatively early print is quite similar to Raphael's original (Figure 5.9), likely updated to match van Leyden's period, and depicts Zuleikha with more clothing than most other depictions.

A print from 1544 by Hans Sebald Beham depicts Zuleikha completely nude and frontally facing the viewer, lightly grabbing Joseph's coat with her right hand (Figure 5.10). It is interesting that Joseph is depicted as naked as well, with his left foot stepping forward to show his genitalia as well, although his face is hidden from the viewer, looking towards Zuleikha. One can imagine how the market for these prints would be male dominated with the purposeful placement of their limbs, in addition to the anonymity of Joseph, so that any man could be in his situation, tempted by a seductress. The depiction of Joseph and Zuleikha in the prints and the peapod work similarly to provide an erotic view of a woman in bed trying to seduce a man, who, in the narrative, is able to resist.

\*

The Judgement of Paris on the right side of the peapod follows the same general representation of the myth, but, like the left side, the attire is updated to be contemporary to the fifteenth century. In depictions and textual sources from antiquity, Paris is described as a young shepard, while in later medieval sources he is also depicted as a knight that dreams about the goddesses.<sup>123</sup> While Paris as the shepherd was popular throughout Europe, Paris as a knight

---

<sup>123</sup> Nickel, "The Judgment of Paris' by Lucas Cranach the Elder," 119.

might have been more common in Northern Europe, and possibly even reached a wider audience through prints. In the depiction on the peapod, Paris is a sleeping knight, and Zues looks like a nobleman or king and, like in paintings depicting the story, the three goddesses awaiting judgment wear no clothing while Paris and Zues are almost completely clothed. The goddesses would also often be depicted from the front, profile, and back, essentially giving the viewer a composite view of nudity, contrasted to the two fully clothed men.<sup>124</sup> The peapod differs from this slightly, showing all three goddesses frontally nude, with their hair framing the sides of their bodies, drawing attention to their breasts and genitalia. The three goddesses look in the direction of the men, awaiting Paris's decision. Beyond the goddesses there is the city of Troy, possibly with its water gate.

Since the peapod is on such a small scale, it seems that the inspiration of the carving might have come from prints, rather than paintings. The paintings tend to include symbols related to the goddesses to differentiate them, while this depiction doesn't seem to make an effort to differentiate the goddesses in a traditional manner. In prints from the Northern Netherlands during the late fifteenth century the two of the goddesses are depicted facing forward, only distinguished by their labels (Figure 5.11) (Figure 5.12).<sup>125</sup> These early prints are quite compositionally similar to what is represented in the peapod.

Later, in 1503, a woodcut version of the Judgment was made for the University of Wittenberg's graduation ceremony, likely by Johannes Hoch (Figure 5.13).<sup>126</sup> This version of the Judgment is almost censored in comparison, as the goddesses are wearing dresses, but have noticeable cleavage. Aside from the dresses, the print shares a few general similarities with the peapod Judgment, such as the crowned Zues with staff, Paris as a knight, sleeping with his

---

<sup>124</sup> Nickel, 119.

<sup>125</sup> Nickel, 121.

<sup>126</sup> Nickel, 122.



helmet and sword discarded, and a fountain in the middle of them all. Johannes Hoch's 1526 painting of the Judgment of Paris seems to draw on the older traditions of nudity and speech scrolls, which the 1503 version lacked, in an updated style almost a quarter of a century later (Figure 5.14). In the 1526 painting all three goddesses face Zues and the knight Paris, each with a different hairstyle, like the 1503 goddesses. The frontmost goddess has her left arm bent at an angle with her hand under her breast, similar to two of the goddesses in the peapod. Also similar to the peapod are the general details of Zues and Paris, as Zues in both holds the golden apple in one hand and a scepter in his other, and Paris is wearing a suit of armor that has a skirt rather than pants, like the earlier print, and his weapon and helmet on the ground beside him.

In the 1503 print, the fountain now behind the figures in the 1526 print has a bird sitting on the lip of it. Both fountains have a small castle-like tower in the center, although the later print has added two spouts out of the tower, similar to the peapods fountain that shows at least two spouts, but implies a total of four. The fountain in the second Master of the Banderoles print from 1460 has an architectural element in the center, and what looks like an animal, possibly lion, face on the lower band. Additionally in this print, there is a monkey holding something near Paris's head. In the 1526 print, there are a number of birds; on the side of the fountain, in the forest, and in the sky. In the peapod, there seems to be a reference to an animal on top of the fountain's column, which initially looks like another frog, but could also be a slightly chipped or worn down version of another animal, such as a bird or monkey which could have symbolic value.

The more geometric style fountain seen in the peapod and prints of the Judgment of Paris is similar to that in the Ghent altarpiece (Figure 5.15). The massive altarpiece, over eleven feet high and fifteen feet wide, was completed by Jan van Eyck in 1432, and is famous for its early

use of oil paint and incredible details, especially on such a large scale. The altarpiece is especially important for the development of art during the late medieval period, as it paid incredible attention to depicting both humans and nature highly naturalistically. The fountain is located in the lower middle panel, below the Agnus Dei (Jesus as a lamb), which is directly below the representation of Jesus in the upper middle panel, creating a strong middle axis for the painting to focus on. Comparing the depiction in the peapod and the prints of the Judgment of Paris to the Ghent altarpiece, a few details stand out as similar, namely the shape and spouts, the animal head at the bottom, and fountain topper.

Like the peapod and early sixteenth century prints of the Judgment, the fountain has two or more spouts with flowing water, while earlier prints seem to favor placing a gothic tower in the center instead. The print from the Master of the Banderoles in the 1460s has one of these towers, but also includes a devilish face at the bottom, like the Ghent fountain. Additionally, while the Ghent fountain has a beautiful rendered angel pouring out two vessels, the ornament atop the fountain in the peapod is still difficult to decipher. The shape and lack of markings around the ornament still suggests that it might be a second, smaller, frog or toad. Although the Ghent altarpiece may not have directly inspired the fountain in the peapod, it is still worth keeping in mind that the Ghent altarpiece has been accessible to the public in Saint Bavo's Cathedral since its creation. As a public work, it would have been available for artists from the Dircksz workshop to study and possibly draw inspiration from.

The path to what is likely Troy effectively uses linear perspective to imply a deep receding background. This seems novel today, but being able to look into a completely different and convincing world would have been an intimate experience, particularly special in its easily portable and likely durable nature. The path leading to Troy is not dissimilar to the path in both

Banderoles prints, especially similar to the first one with its waving lines to represent the sea and large gate with its defensive wall. Inside the walls of Troy in the peapod, there is what looks like a person on the back of a horse with another person, possibly kneeling down, next to them. The horse could possibly be the Trojan horse, although that seems unlikely.

Other prints of the Judgment of Paris from the early sixteenth century follow a similar pattern, like Lucas Cranach's 1508 woodcut (Figure 5.16), with the men similarly dressed, Paris with knight pants, and women fully nude. A rare pearwood relief from Bavaria, made by the Master I. P. around 1530, shows the Judgment of Paris mostly in low relief shows the goddesses from each angle, and the men dressed with armor (Figure 5.17).

The Judgment of Paris was also depicted on other objects during this era, such as combs made of ivory, with a depiction of David and Bathsheba on the other side (Figure 5.18). On the comb made between 1520 and 1530, Paris is sleeping against a outcropping of rock, with Zeus holding the scepter and apple and the fountain with two spouts behind him. Of course, to the left are the three goddesses, relatively simply represented, looking towards the men. On the other side is a depiction of David's message to Bathsheba (Figure 5.19), a story from the Old Testament where King David sees a woman, Bathsheba, bathing, and demands she be brought back to him, and slept with her. The story goes on that David tries to convince Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, to sleep with her to convince him that it was their baby, and not King Davids. This did not work and King David had Uriah killed in battle and married Bathsheba, who gave birth to Solomon. As the Judgment of Paris warns against vain decisions, the story of David and Bathsheba on the other side could perhaps be another warning against making hasty decisions.

Another comb from France made between 1530 and 1550 is similar, with the three nude goddesses facing the men with their fifteenth or sixteenth century clothing (Figure 5.20),

fountain with two water spouts, and includes another man, possibly Hermes, and a horse for Zues or Paris. On the other side of the comb is David and Bathsheba again (Figure 5.21), where David and another man look like Zues and Paris, and Bathsheba has three ladies in waiting, a parallel to the three goddesses. It is interesting that both narratives warn against sexual desires, on a comb, an object presumably made to help one's appearance, possibly as ironic references.

Beneath Paris, the toad or frog nestled into the outcropping is generally symbolic of death or sin. Pliny believed that toads were poisonous, possibly deadly, and in Exodus a plague of frogs is set upon Egypt.<sup>127</sup> In the short article ‘Satan “Squat like a Toad,”’ Irby B. Cauthen Jr. from the University of Virginia called attention to sixteenth and seventeenth century sources on toads, from natural historians such as Conrad Gesner (1516-1565) and Edward Topsell (1572-1625). In Gesner’s page on toads, he notes that they live in marshes, and are “like to stir up with anger, and to inflame faith” (Figure 5.22).<sup>128</sup> Topsell also notes that toads are “venomous and remarkable for courage and strength,” and “are bred out of the putrefaction and the corruption of the earth.”<sup>129</sup> In other instances, toads and frogs in the medieval era were also associated with Jews and the devil. Sara Lipton notes that, “The appearance of the toad in the hands of a jewish worshipper rejected by Christ, then, would have been read by the medieval audience in the light of such current references, and necessarily playing into and reinforced existing conceptions of Jews as heretics and devil worshippers.”<sup>130</sup>

Gesner and Topsell are not alone in their unfavorable associations with frogs, as the Tudor pattern book also associates them with lowly creatures, like rats (Figure 5.23). Additionally, *Aesop’s Fables* may have helped inform late medieval associations with certain

---

<sup>127</sup> Cauthen, “Satan ‘Squat like a Toad,’” 95.

<sup>128</sup> Conrad Gesner, “Quadrup.ferorum”

<sup>129</sup> Cauthen, “Satan ‘Squat like a Toad,’” 96.

<sup>130</sup> Lipton, “The Root of All Evil,” 319.

animals, like the frog. In one fable, “The Frogs Who Wished for a King,” the frogs ask Jupiter for a new king, despite their perfectly luxurious life governing themselves. Jupiter sends down a log to be their new king, but they quickly grow tired of it and ask for a new king again, and this time Jupiter sends a crane that starts catching and eating the frogs. According to the Library of Congress, the moral of that story is, “Be sure you can better your condition before you seek to change.”<sup>131</sup> By including the frogs in the depiction of the Judgment, the artist and viewer might be inclined to recall the moral of Aesop’s fable, and take heed from a part-historical, part-mythological tale. Through multiple connections, the frog had been traditionally associated with, either as the cause or in close proximity, to the dead, as well as sins, and even the devil. The inclusion of the frog at the bottom of the Judgment of Paris likely speaks to the immoral decision of Paris, who has foregone earning honor himself and is given Helen without effort.

The frog is not entirely unique to this boxwood carving, appearing in a couple of others part of the small collection. In one half of a boxwood prayer bead depicting St. Jerome before Jesus on the cross, a small frog sits in the grass between them (Figure 5.24).<sup>132</sup> In one of the miniature boxwood altarpieces on the left panel, a frog is sitting alone in a sort of cave, not unlike the one in the peapod, and is placed directly below Jesus carrying the cross (Figure 5.25).<sup>133</sup> The inclusion of frogs in other objects suggests that the boxwood carvers undoubtedly used the animal to reference ideas, either directly or indirectly related to the scene.

The market for illuminated books of hours that might have exposed wealthy and noble readers to symbolic representations of peapods, along with cultural associations that likely already existed to associate the peapod with fertility, and later the Virgin Mary. Additionally, prints were also collected and available to a much larger audience and artists throughout Europe,

---

<sup>131</sup> “Library of Congress Aesop Fables.”

<sup>132</sup> <https://boxwood.ago.ca/node/2193/mirador>

<sup>133</sup> <https://boxwood.ago.ca/node/2144/mirador>

especially in the artistic circles in and near the Netherlands. These separate, but relatively contemporary collecting and devotional practices allowed for the creation of at least two objects carved in the shape of a peapod, if not more that have not survived or been rediscovered. Although the interiors are largely different from each other, both peapods' survival to today speaks to their unprecedented creation in the shape of a peapod, where the novelty likely aided in its survival. While the first peapod has been associated with Adam Dircksz, both peapods have little history beyond their general area and time of creation. The museum websites assign the peapods origin to North Germany, although the association with Dicksz could limit the patrons to wealthy patrons near Utrecht or Guelders, or similarly wealthy noble patrons from surrounding courts. Even given this information, who the peapods might have been made for is still in question, and will probably remain impossible to determine.

Even so, it is worth considering the type of person that might have commissioned or purchased the peapods, and what it might have been used for. Since the peapod is closely related to symbols of fertility, the peapods stand out first as possibly objects commissioned by women. Illustrations in books of hours such as the Cleves or Van Alphen Hours might have inspired the split feature of the peapod, which effectively doubled the area available for decoration. While books of hours were made for everyone, it is also notable that they have also been designed for women as wedding gifts, pregnancies, and births. Virginia Reinburg notes that even books of hours initially made for women are also used as the prayer book for the entire family, and passed down to other members of the family.<sup>134</sup> Reinburg also specifically mentions a book of hours from ca. 1460 that passed down more than four generations of a family from Amiens.<sup>135</sup> While the exact provenance of a number of the manuscripts with peapods is unknown, it seems likely

---

<sup>134</sup> Reinburg, "For the Use of Women," 236.

<sup>135</sup> Reinburg, 238.

that for a number of them they could have stayed within the family for a number of generations, possibly influencing artistic commissions long after their creation.

Reinburg also mentioned that Philippa of Gudelters, the grand daughter of Catherine of Cleves, donated manuscripts to converts, and “used gifts to affirm relationship and spiritual support,” after the death of her husband,<sup>136</sup> emphasizing her clear understanding of the power of gifts and how important manuscripts can be for devotion. Additionally, she noted, “the book of hours was a special kind of legacy from a woman to her female heirs,” which suggests that many manuscripts did survive hundreds of years in this manner, likely due to the thoughtful inheritance of the books from woman to woman, along with many other objects ‘for women.’ The careful preservation of the first peapod with five peas inside would suggest that it was treated with respect, and likely used in the context of a private devotional object.

The second peapod on the other hand has an interesting pairing of narratives that makes the use and understanding of the object more difficult to infer. The second peapod depicts Joseph fleeing Potiphar’s wife and the Judgement of Paris, narratives about chastity and refusing a seductress, and warning against falling for goddesses for vain reasons, both about self-restraint. The exterior of the peapod is quite naturalistic, and, as it is symbolic of fertility, would not have been unusually odd for a woman to have as an accessory either, as seen in the *St Bartholomew Altarpiece*. If the depiction of Joseph fleeing Potiphar’s wife was meant to teach or remind a woman of specific morals, it might be to stay chaste like Joseph and refuse sexual desires. For the Judgement of Paris, it could be referencing in general how vanity can lead to poor decisions and consequences. While this interpretation is not impossible, it seems unlikely that morals would be chosen that refer to women's sexuality while openly showing women that are behaving in sinful ways. If the peapod were made for a women it seems more likely that it would include a

---

<sup>136</sup> Reinburg, 238.

scene of the Nativity or Annunciation, or a Saint known for helping women with fertility issues, rather than male centered narratives about chastity and refusing seductresses.

The peapod instead seems to be a sort of ironic moral lesson more suited towards the concerns of a man. Joseph fleeing warns against falling for seductresses, no matter how difficult it may be, while also rewarding the viewer with a glimpse at Zuleikha's bare chest. The miniature nature of the peapod and inclusion of architectural elements, the viewer, through close looking, would have also been able to, in a way, transport themselves into that small world, possibly imagining themselves as a character within. This sort of close looking would have led viewers to closely take in the surrounding details and ponder the details of the story. Similarly, the Judgment of Paris could remind the viewer to ponder difficult decisions, and warn against decisions for vain reasons. Like Joseph, Paris' involvement in the scene is quite passive, and the attention is almost immediately drawn to the naked goddesses. Under the guise of Zues presented Paris with a near impossible choice, the peapod shows not one but three nude women, making a total of four in one small carving less than ten centimeters in length.

\*

While the low relief nature of the second peapod could be due to a difference in artistic ability, it could have also been a choice to make the peapod shallower and not include any complicated features, like the five peas of the first peapod. The low relief nature of the peapod made it easier for the viewer to not only explore the scenes with their eyes, but their sense of touch as well. Although it could simply be how the wood has aged, areas around the woman's breasts, the men's heads and chests, and the horse look slightly darker, as if they have picked up hand oils. In *Small Wonders*, Frits Scholten describes the interior as "two fairly low reliefs that no longer have a religious function but are devoted to the erotic and women's wiles," that reflects



the “growing fascination with eroticism in early sixteenth century northern art.”<sup>137</sup> Scholten seems to think that the peapod cannot function as an object for both religious *and* erotic use, although there doesn’t seem to be a reason they could not co-exist, given a century later the flourishing genre of suggestive Dutch artwork during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>138</sup>

Scholten suggests that the peapod could be “regarded as an early forerunner of eighteenth century tobacco boxes with erotic scenes on the inside,” like this snuff box with a movable piece that changes the scene from savory to unsavory (Figure 5.26).<sup>139</sup> This is not entirely unrealistic as there were also “peep boxes” that were specially constructed to provide the viewer a glimpse into women’s areas that were normally off limits.<sup>140</sup> Samuel van Hoogstraten’s perspective box is one example of how Dutch artists during the seventeenth century offered the viewer a limited, specific view of the interior of a house, including the bedroom with a woman sleeping within (Figure 5.27). While the interior of the box has been painted using techniques with perspective, the exterior top panel was also painted using an interesting perspective. When looking at the painting straight on, the image looks distorted, elongated towards one side. The perspective of the painting seems irregular as it was likely meant to be viewed singularly from the peep-hole side, made visible by lifting the head higher.

The painting stands out in stark contrast to the simple interior scene depicted in the box, as it is almost a bird's eye view looking into someone's bed. The bed has deep red curtains that surround it on all sides, not dissimilar to the bed with blue curtains seen within the box. Inside the bed curtains there is a nude woman lying in the bed with a cherub (Figure 5.28). The peep

---

<sup>137</sup> Scholten, “The Boxwood Carvers of the Late Gothic Netherlands,” 44.

<sup>138</sup> *Kitchen Scene*, Peter Wtewael, 1620s

<sup>139</sup> Scholten, “The Boxwood Carvers of the Late Gothic Netherlands,” 44.

<sup>140</sup>

box is an interesting creation and it both plays with perspective and encourages extremely close looking from the viewer, who, looking over the box rather than inside it as intended, is rewarded with a revealing image of a woman, as if they are looking in through the bed curtains of a woman in bed. Although Hoogstraten's peep box was made between 1655 and 1660, over a century after the peapods were carved, it speaks to an established artistic motif of almost hidden erotic scenes. The second peapod is similar to the peep box in that they, from the outside, seem very humble, with an interior that encourages close looking, for both appreciating the artistic skill as well as reminding the viewer of religious morals, while also providing the viewer an erotic scene.

The peapod is thoroughly symbolic of fertility, especially for women as the peas grow within the pod, similarly to babies growing in pregnant women. For the most part however, peapods and fertility have not addressed any possible male interpretation or association. Though fertility is often seen as something that women are responsible for in relationships, men make up the second half of fertility. In his 1653 publication, Culpeper reported that chickpeas could "provoke urine, and are thought to increase sperm."<sup>141</sup> The fact that Culpeper mentions its effect on men's fertility shows that this might have been something they paid attention to and actively sought out solutions for.

Additionally, the shape of the boxwood pea pod, aside from its obvious pea pod shape, might have sexual connotations, both in its open and closed form. When closed, the peapod has a phallic shape. Phallic objects have long been a part of human history, used as both sexual objects and representative of male fertility. One of the most famous gods for male fertility is the Greek and Roman god Priapus, often depicted with an enlarged phallus (Figure 5.29), who was "mainly worshiped in the countryside where his most common offerings were fruits and vegetables,"<sup>142</sup>

---

<sup>141</sup> Cleene and Lejeune, *Compendium of Symbolic and Ritual Plants in Europe*, 2002, 2:449.

<sup>142</sup> Neto et al., "Gods Associated with Male Fertility and Virility," 269.

according to the Journal of Andrology.<sup>143</sup> As the Renaissance was reaching Northern Europe around the fifteenth century, medieval scholars might have even learned about Priapus. The shape of the phallus had long been used and represented to directly reference phalluses, as well as symbols of male fertility and guardians of male genitalia.

Nearly a century after the peapod was created, sexual innuendos in Dutch paintings were commissioned more often by the upper class. Following the Protestant Reformation, religious images were less common and symbolic or referential secular artworks took their place. Paintings such as Peter Wtewael's *Kitchen Scene* made in the 1620s (Figure 5.30), were commissioned by a member of the upper class as both commentary on the lower classes perceived sexual promiscuity, as well as a scene with erotic connotations that would have been immoral if it represented actual members of the upper class. At face value, the painting is of a servant woman in a kitchen, preparing different kinds of meats, and a servant man bringing her another bird and eggs. However, when the viewer looks more closely, the hand gestures and placement of their hands stand out as sexual. The way that the woman is holding the meat skewer and placing the raw chicken onto it is referential of phalluses, as well as the way that the man has his hand placed on the jug he is holding, in addition to his basket of eggs, symbolic of women's fertility. These paintings, in addition to the increasingly obvious nudity seen in the prints, as Scholten notes, clearly show an increasing interest and acceptance of nudity and sexuality. The phallic shape of the pea pods might be an early experiment in creating artworks referential of erotic or sexual subjects.

In addition to its phallic shape when closed, the open shape of the peapod could also be seen as a vulvar shape. In "Pea-pods and Molluscs from the Master of Catherine of Cleves Workshop," Randall notes that like the Cleves Hours (Figure 3.15), the Van Alphen hours

---

<sup>143</sup> "the branch of physiology and medicine which deals with diseases and conditions specific to men"

(Figure 5.31) includes a page with mussels (or molluscs) and other shellfish in the margins. The molluscs in the border of both Hours are mostly open and depicted from the front and back. The shells are mostly light tan with black stripes, with the meat of the mussel inside almost entirely made out of gold leaf. Randall notes that the molluscs in both Hours have generally eluded interpretation, and does not mention the symbolic significance of them outside of their possible relation to Saint James. However, molluscs were often associated with sins such as gluttony, lust, and temptation in Christianity.<sup>144</sup>

In the Cleves Hours, molluscs surround Saint Ambrose, which Plummer notes in his publication of the Hours as “not normally part of Saint Ambrose’s iconography.”<sup>145</sup> The molluscs could possibly relate to Saint Ambrose’s “work on the moral obligations of the clergy” or his avocation for asceticism (a lifestyle characterized by abstinence from sensual pleasures) that “he urged upon them [young women] the crowning virtue of virginity,”<sup>146</sup> It seems likely that the molluscs included around Saint Ambrose were symbols of lust, reminding the viewer through both Saint Ambrose and the margins to remain virtuous in the face of temptation.

Similarly, in the Van Alphen Hours, there are molluscs and other shells in the margins, this time surrounding a scene of the Mouth of Hell. As Randall notes, the inclusion of these unique motifs in both Hours supports the theory that they were made in the same workshop. Like the marginal peapods, the molluscs in the Van Alphen Hours seem less closely related to the main picture than in the Cleves Hours. Still, the molluscs surrounding the mouth of hell might reference sinful actions and remind the viewer to guard themselves against temptation, unless they wish to be in the mouth of hell as well.

---

<sup>144</sup> [Spirits and Symbolism](#)

<sup>145</sup> Plummer, Hours, 120. *Saint Ambrose*

<sup>146</sup> “Saint Ambrose | Biography, Writings, Patron Saint, & Facts | Britannica.”

As Randall has noted, the pea pod and molluscs motifs are extremely unique to those two Hours, and clearly relate to ideas of fertility, sexuality, and lust. These depictions are specifically unique in their depiction of the pea pods and molluscs are almost completely open, like the boxwood pea pods when they are open. All of this on molluscs and fertility to note the open shape of the peapods is not dissimilar to that of molluscs, associated with lust, and both of them are reminiscent of vulvas. The vaginal and phallic shape of the peapod when opened and closed could have been an added layer to the erotic nature of the scenes within, possibly even satirical.

The first boxwood peapod with ten biblical scenes has a finer finish than the second, and has thus been assigned to the Dircksz workshop. It's state of preservation, attention to detail, and physical sense of interaction lead me to believe that the peapod would be used more similarly to a rosary. The user could open the peas after each prayer to reveal a miniature version to meditate on, while also creating a strong connection between the shape of the peapod and its important edible counterpart. The quality of peapod in both finish and construction also suggests a wealthy patron, possibly made for a woman due to the associations of fertility with the peapod given to her on the occasion of a marriage or birth.

The second peapod depicting Joseph fleeing Potiphar's Wife and the Judgment of Paris is simultaneously more and less difficult to understand compared to the first. Looking plainly at the quality of the peapods, it seems likely that the second peapod came from a second or third workshop operating alongside the Dircksz workshop making miniature boxwood carvings in the Netherlands. While the exterior of the peapod implies five peas inside, like the first, it does not have any openable peas and instead has a detailed low relief carving on each side of the pod.

The narratives depicted in the peapod are not seen in any of the other boxwood carvings, one from the Old Testament and one from Greek mythology. The scenes are compositionally

quite similar to print representations of the narratives made both before and after the peapods were. The story of Joseph fleeing Potiphar's wife warns against unchivalrous behavior and praises Joseph's ability to refuse her. On the other side, the Judgment of Paris warns against essentially taking the easy path to obtain the most beautiful woman. Together, both scenes emphasize the importance of self restraint, and show one story of success and one of failure.

Even given the narratives' warnings, the representation of the women in both scenes with the breasts prominently uncovered implies that the object might not have been completely focused on moralistic teachings. In addition to the prominence of female nudity in the scenes, the open and closed shape of the peapod might have had suggestive meanings for the user.

## CONCLUSION

The boxwood peapods are a small but fascinating group of objects, produced with the greatest artistic skill for an elite and informed audience of noble patrons. In their wide range of references—from medieval horticultural practices, to religious symbolism, to other similar objects whether of boxwood or metal work—they open up an exploration of the creative ways in which late medieval and early modern art engaged aspects of everyday life and turned it into intricate pieces of art.

We have seen how the peapod has been a part of human history and culture for millenia, collecting numerous uses, meanings, superstitions, and traditions. In Northern Europe they have been associated with a number of Christian saints and eaten on their Saints days and customs surrounding fertility and marriage. This belief went beyond superstition, as herbalists like Nicholas Culpeper noted how it would increase sperm or provoke menstruation. Ideas about gardening were also connected to spirituality, through the rosarium and cultivation of the garden of the soul.

Peapods were not limited to the garden, represented in prints, engravings, drawings, paintings, illuminated manuscripts, carvings and more. The key aspect in many of these forms of the pea plant, whether the flower or pod, is the ability to compare. The user, if wealthy enough to own some of these more extravagant representations, might have their own kitchen garden in which they are able to, either directly or in their mind, compare their manmade version to nature. Even without having a garden, food made from peas was abundant in the diets of all levels of society throughout Europe and the Mediterranean, and the owner of a manmade depiction of a

peapod might be more likely to recall common religious associations with the pea, such as humility, purity, and fertility.

Representations of peapods are particularly abundant in botanical or scientific illustrations in the form of prints or herbalism books. The creation of the printing press during the beginning of the fifteenth century made the recreation of these images and texts much easier, but still necessitated a balance between detail and legibility. While paintings might recreate what the plant looks like more naturalistically, prints conveyed the most important, identifiable aspects of the plant to inform the viewer, rather than amaze. At the same time, drawings and paintings became increasingly popular as well as ways of capturing plants at their most beautiful, even if unrealistic, to add to collections, such as curiosity cabinets, instead of preserving a real specimen. Artists also collected and created their own paintings of plants and combined them into pattern books to refer to for other works of art, but even those had underlying Christological morals.

During the late medieval period, religious texts such as prayer texts were still the main books being printed for the clergy and wealthy patrons. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Books of Hours saw an incredible influx of artistic development and experimentation. As the decoration of manuscripts became more embellished, animals, plants and humans were increasingly painted in the margins, sometimes supplementally and sometimes satirically related to both the text and almost full page miniature paintings. Both pea flowers and peapods appear in close proximity to the Virgin Mary and Christ, although there are specific instances where the connection is made more distinct, such as in the Catherine of Cleves or Van Alphen Hours. In many of these manuscripts, specific flowers are included to reference specific teachings or aspects of Christ's life, including the pea flower, often referential of Christ's Passion and Mary's



humility. However, in some instances when the pea flower has peapods as well, it seems referential to ideas of rebirth and fertility.

While the carved peapods represent a real plant, they are also made of boxwood, a plant that has been associated with rebirth and eternal life since antiquity. Wood carving was common throughout Europe, although specifically during the first quarter of the sixteenth century boxwood carvings became extremely popular in the Netherlands. Three workshops in the Netherlands have been identified, although out of the surviving items, a large portion of them are from the Adam Dircksz workshop near Utrecht. The peapod with five peas within has been assigned to the Dircksz workshop, and looks as if it would function like a rosary, with ten scenes from the Passion of Christ within. The workshop primarily made prayer beads to attach to rosaries or belts, as well as miniature diptychs and altarpieces, as well as a number of unique pieces such as completely carved rosaries, Mary heads, skulls, coffins, and complete letters. With such emphasis on *memento mori*, one is drawn to wonder if the shape of the pea is something akin to a *memento vitae*.

The other peapod, with Joseph Fleeing Potiphar's Wife and The Judgment of Paris depicted inside, is more challenging to decode. The moral of the story about Joseph is about refusing a seductress and staying chaste even in the face of punishment, and the myth of the Judgment of Paris addresses issues of honor and vanity. The peapod shape likely refers to ideas of fertility, while the interior scenes seem to emphasize chastity. Although the narratives on the surface seem to promote self-restraint, between Potiphar's wife and the three goddesses, there are three nude women represented in the object. The presentation of their sexuality pushes against its use purely as an object of virtue, and seems almost satirical in its offering of temptations.

For this reason, it does not seem likely that the second peapod would have been commissioned for a woman. Instead, it was likely made for a man who was either open to experimentation from a workshop, or someone knowledgeable enough about each aspect to request it. It is possible that it was part of a larger collection of naturalistic carvings of edible foods, like the walnut prayer bead, although the peapod shape still seems quite unique. It is also surprising the amount of details packed into both scenes, each of which might have reminded the user of particular ideas or references. Furthermore, both the closed and open shape of the peapod can be seen as referential to male and female genitalia, possibly a precursor to suggestive seventeenth century creations like peepboxes. The abundance of expensive books of hours illuminations with peapods and presence of boxwood carvings in the highest levels of society suggests it might be possible that these peapods belonged to similarly wealthy patrons.

I have tried to explore a number of different aspects to try and shed light on the use and meaning of the wooden peapods, but there are many more different elements and pieces of information that have not been able to be considered in this paper. One detail I found too late in the research to consider in this paper were comparisons between different countries' royals and mythological characters, like Mary of Burgundy being referred to as Juno, and Maximilian I related to Aeneas or Trojan princes. Another important aspect of high society during the sixteenth century in Europe was the Order of the Golden Fleece, a Catholic order committed to chivalry. Seeing as the interior of the second peapod deals with ideas of self-restraint, it might have been partly informed by information from or about the Order. Lastly, I was not able to delve into as many Dutch sources and as well as catalogs of royal collections as I would have liked to note possible carvings that have not survived.

The carved boxwood peapods ultimately seem to be objects commissioned by wealthy patrons, possibly from two different workshops in the Netherlands. The objects would have served as devotional aids while also outwardly displaying their piety and ability to commission such intricate objects. The peapod shape might refer to ideas of fertility, especially as the interior scenes of the second peapod directly reference ideas of self-restraint. While there is little scholarly discussion about these two objects there is still ample room to explore each of each and develop a deeper awareness of what the medieval perception might have been of these shapes and narratives, and how that might influence its use.

## Bibliography

“Antoine Vérard’s Early Printed Books in the British Library.” Accessed April 24, 2023.

<https://blogs.bl.uk/european/2018/07/antoine-v%C3%A9rards-early-printed-books-in-the-british-library.html>.

Bergmann, Rosemarie. “Notes on the Ottawa Madonna with the Flowering Pea.” *RACAR : Revue d’art Canadienne* 14, no. 1–2 (November 17, 2020): 70–74.

<https://doi.org/10.7202/1073452ar>.

“Bodleian Library MS. Douce 8.” Accessed April 24, 2023.

<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/5ea19124-c875-4486-a120-4e8263641d04/>.

Bravinder, Tristan. “7 Favorite Flowers from Renaissance Manuscripts and Their Christian Symbolism.” *Getty Iris* (blog), December 20, 2017.

<https://blogs.getty.edu/iris/7-favorite-flowers-from-renaissance-manuscripts-and-their-christian-symbolism/>.

*Breast Ornament*. 1620. Enamelled gold, set with 208 table-cut and triangular point-cut diamonds. Victoria & Albert Museum Metalwork Collection.

<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O33884/breast-ornament-unknown/>.

Cauthen, Irby B. “Satan ‘Squat like a Toad.’” *Milton Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (1973): 95–97.

Cleene, M. de, and Marie Claire Lejeune. *Compendium of Symbolic and Ritual Plants in Europe*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Ghent: Man & Culture, 2002.

———. *Compendium of Symbolic and Ritual Plants in Europe*. Vol. 2. 2 vols. Ghent: Man & Culture, 2002.

Culpeper, Nicholas. “The Complete Herbal.” *Bibliomania*. Accessed April 24, 2023.

<http://www.bibliomania.com/2/1/66/113/frameset.html>.

“Cybele - Livius.” Accessed April 26, 2023.

[https://www.livius.org/articles/religion/cybele/#:~:text=Cybele%20\(Greek%20%CE%9A%CF%85%CE%B2%CE%AD%CE%BB%CE%B7\)%3A%20Anatolian,she%20was%20the%20universal%20mother.](https://www.livius.org/articles/religion/cybele/#:~:text=Cybele%20(Greek%20%CE%9A%CF%85%CE%B2%CE%AD%CE%BB%CE%B7)%3A%20Anatolian,she%20was%20the%20universal%20mother.)

DaBoss. “The Monkeys and Their Mother.” Fables of Aesop, November 30, 2013.

<https://fablesfaesop.com/the-monkeys-and-their-mother.html>.

D’Agostino, Mary Ellen. “Privy Business.” *Archaeology* 53, no. 4 (2000): 32–37.

DBNL. “4713. J. van Cranevelt. (K.A.), Briefwisseling. Deel 4: 1644-1649, Constantijn Huygens.” DBNL. Accessed April 24, 2023.

[https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/huyg001jawo06\\_01/huyg001jawo06\\_01\\_1118.php](https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/huyg001jawo06_01/huyg001jawo06_01_1118.php).

Ellis, Lisa, Alexandra Suda, Ronald Richard Martin, Elizabeth A. Moffatt, Jennifer Poulin, Heidi Sobol, Priam Givord, Craig Boyko, Ian Lefebvre, and Andrew J. Nelson. “Technology for Technology’s Sake: The Technical Study of Gothic Miniature Boxwood Carvings in the Thomson Collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario.” *Cultural Heritage Science*, 2019.

Falkenburg, Reindert. “Prayer Nuts Seen through the ‘Eyes of the Heart.’” In *Small Wonders: Late Gothic Boxwood Microcarvings from the Low Countries*, n.d.

German. “Master of the Saint Bartholomew Altar.” National Gallery of Art. Accessed April 26, 2023. <https://www.nga.gov/collection/artist-info.1699.html>.

Kavaler, Ethan Matt. “Prayer Nuts and Early Modern Sculpture in the Netherlands.” In *Prayer Nuts, Private Devotion, and Early Modern Art Collecting*. Abegg-Stiftung, 2017.

Kern, E. H. “Quirky History: A Monkey on My Back in Medieval Manuscripts.” Quirk Books, October 24, 2016.

<https://www.quirkbooks.com/quirky-history-a-monkey-on-my-back-in-medieval-manuscr>

ipts/.

Knowles, Marika Takanishi. "Ornament in the Kitchen Garden: The Pea as Motif for Goldsmithing in the France of Louis XIII." *Art History* 40, no. 5 (November 2017): 964–93. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8365.12287>.

Levy, Evonne. "Ottaviano Jannella: Micro-Sculptor in the Age of the Microscope." *The Burlington Magazine* 144, no. 1192 (July 2002): 420–28.

"Library of Congress Aesop Fables." Accessed April 28, 2023. <https://read.gov/aesop/059.html>.

"Library of Congress Aesop Fables." Accessed April 28, 2023. <https://read.gov/aesop/048.html>.

Lipton, Sara. "The Root of All Evil: Jews, Money and Metaphor in the Bible Moralisée." *Medieval Encounters* 1, no. 3 (January 1, 1995): 301–22. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006795X00019>.

Marceau, Henri G. "Boxwood Sculpture." *Bulletin of the Pennsylvania Museum* 26, no. 136 (November 1930): 18. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3794374>.

Marrow, James H. "Dutch Manuscript Illumination Before the Master of Catherine of Cleves." *Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art / Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 19, no. 1 (1968): 51–113. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22145966-90000402>.

Marrow, James H., Anna Sophia Korteweg, Henri L. M. Defoer, and Wilhelmina C. M. Wüstefeld. *The Golden Age of Dutch Manuscript Painting: Exhibition, New York, the Pierpont Morgan Library, 1 March-6 May 1990*. New York: G. Braziller, 1990.

Neto, F. T. L., P. V. Bach, R. J. L. Lyra, J. C. Borges Junior, G. T. D. S. Maia, L. C. N. Araujo, and S. V. C. Lima. "Gods Associated with Male Fertility and Virility." *Andrology* 7, no. 3 (May 2019): 267–72. <https://doi.org/10.1111/andr.12599>.

Nickel, Helmut. "'The Judgment of Paris' by Lucas Cranach the Elder: Nature, Allegory, and

- Alchemy.” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 16 (January 1981): 117–29.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1512772>.
- “Peapod with Ten Biblical Scenes | The Boxwood Project.” Accessed April 26, 2023.  
<https://boxwood.ago.ca/object/peapod-ten-biblical-scenes>.
- “Plants Of The Garden.” Accessed April 24, 2023.  
<https://www.csu.edu.au/special/accc/biblegarden/plants-of-the-garden>.
- “Prayer Nuts: Feasting the ‘Eyes of the Heart.’” In *Prayer Nuts, Private Devotion, and Early Modern Art Collecting*. Abegg-Stiftung, 2017.
- Randall, L. M. C. “Pea-Pods and Molluscs from the Master of Catherine of Cleves Workshop” 100, no. 153 (January 1974).
- Reesing, Ingmar. “Patronage and Early Ownership of Sixteenth-Century Micro-Carvings from the Northern Netherlands.” In *Small Wonders: Late Gothic Boxwood Microcarvings from the Low Countries*, n.d.
- Reinburg, Virginia. “‘For the Use of Women’: Women and Books of Hours.” *Early Modern Women* 4 (2009): 235–40.
- “Saint Ambrose | Biography, Writings, Patron Saint, & Facts | Britannica.” Accessed April 28, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Ambrose>.
- Schaeffer, Elizabeth. “Image and Meaning in the Floral Borders of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves.” Masters Theses, Eastern Illinois University, 1987.
- Scholten, Frits. “A Prayer Nut in a Silver Housing by ‘Adam Dirckz.’” *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 59, no. 4 (January 14, 2022): 322–47. <https://doi.org/10.52476/trb.11485>.
- . “Immersive Play: Perception and Use of Small Devotionalia in the Late Middle Ages.” *Queeste* 26, no. 2 (January 2019): 152–76.

———. “The Boxwood Carvers of the Late Gothic Netherlands.” In *Small Wonders: Late Gothic Boxwood Microcarvings from the Low Countries*, n.d.

Scholten, Frits, and Reindert Falkenburg. *A Sense of Heaven: 16th Century Boxwood Carvings for Private Devotion*. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 1999.

Spicer, Joaneath. “Miniature Mysteries: New Proposals on the Handling, Creation, and Authentication of Late Medieval Prayer Nuts.” *The Walters Art Museum* 73 (2018): 79–86.

“St Christina | Glossary | National Gallery, London.” Accessed April 26, 2023.

<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/glossary/st-christina>.

Stowell, Steven. “Reading the Margins in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves.” *Word & Image* 24, no. 4 (October 2008): 378–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02666286.2008.10406263>.

Suda, Alexandra, and Barbara Drake Boehm. “Handpicked: Collecting Boxwood Carvings from the Sixteenth to the Twenty-First Centuries.” In *Small Wonders: Late Gothic Boxwood Microcarvings from the Low Countries*, n.d.

Sullivan, Margaret A. “Peter Bruegel the Elder’s Two Monkeys: A New Interpretation.” *The Art Bulletin* 63, no. 1 (March 1, 1981): 114–26.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00043079.1981.10787851>.

“The Making of Gothic Boxwood Miniatures | The Boxwood Project.” Accessed April 26, 2023.

<https://boxwood.ago.ca/publication/making-gothic-boxwood-miniatures>.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art. “Master of Claude de France | Book of Flower Studies | French.” Accessed April 24, 2023.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/823979>.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art. “Saint Christopher Carrying Christ | German.” Accessed April



- 24, 2023. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/471986>.
- The Morgan Library & Museum. "Hours of the Virgin," May 30, 2017.  
<https://www.themorgan.org/collection/hours-of-catherine-of-cleves/14>.
- Toussaint-Samat, Maguelonne. *A History of Food*. New expanded ed. Chichester, West Sussex, U.K. ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- "Toys for the Soul: Prayer-Nuts and Pomanders in Late Medieval Devotion." In *A Sense of Heaven: 16th Century Boxwood Carvings for Private Devotion*. Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 1999.
- Van Buren, Anne H. "The Master of Mary of Burgundy and His Colleagues: The State of Research and Questions of Method." *Zeitschrift Für Kunstgeschichte* 38, no. 3/4 (1975): 286. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1481893>.
- Van Cranevelt, Joost. "Appendix: Description of an Ingenius Apple." In *Small Wonders: Late Gothic Boxwood Microcarvings from the Low Countries*, n.d.
- "Walters Ms. W.782, Van Alphen Hours." Accessed April 24, 2023.  
<https://www.thedigitalwalters.org/Data/WaltersManuscripts/html/W782/description.html>.
- "What Is Boxwood? | The Boxwood Project." Accessed April 26, 2023.  
<https://boxwood.ago.ca/publication/what-boxwood>.
- Wixom, William D. "A Brabantine Boxwood Triptych." *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts* 61, no. 1–2 (July 1983): 38–45. <https://doi.org/10.1086/DIA23182599>.
- "Workshop Practices." In *Small Wonders: Late Gothic Boxwood Microcarvings from the Low Countries*, n.d.

Figures



Figure 2.1, “Snow pea with flower,” Gardener’s Path,  
<https://gardenerspath.com/plants/vegetables/grow-snow-peas/>

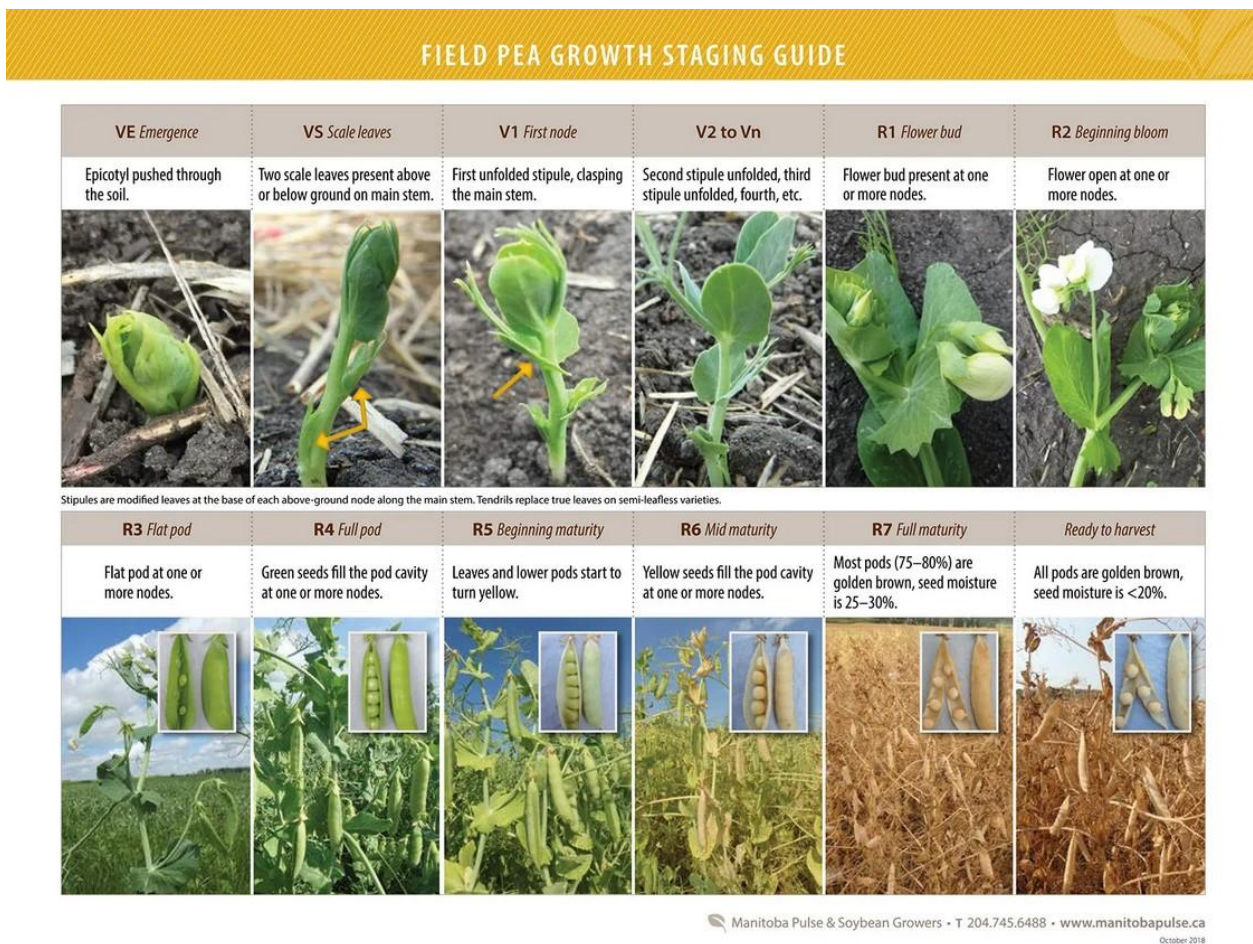


Figure 2.2, “Field Pea Growth Staging Guide,” Manitoba Pulse & Soybean Growers,  
<https://www.manitobapulse.ca/2018/10/field-pea-growth-staging-guide/>



Figure 3.1, Jacopo Filippo, *The Carrara Herbal*, c. 1390-1404, parchment, 35 x 24 cm, British Library Digitised Manuscripts, London, fol. 26r, [https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=egerton\\_ms\\_2020\\_fs001r](https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=egerton_ms_2020_fs001r)



Figure 3.2, Master of Claude de France, *Wild Pea with a Moth* in *Book of Flower Studies*, c. 1510-1515, watercolor on parchment, 15.4 x 10.2 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, fol. 32



Figure 3.3, *Pois* from *Le jardin de santé*, Paris: Antoine Vérard, 1501. In Marika Knowles, "Ornament in the Kitchen Garden," 16. Cambridge, MA: Houghton Library, Harvard University.



Figure 3.4, Adam Dircksz, *Peapod with Ten Biblical Scenes*, c. 1500, boxwood, 10 cm. Berlin, Kunstgewerbemuseum, <https://boxwood.ago.ca/object/peapod-ten-biblical-scenes>



Figure 3.5, North German, *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife; Judgment of Paris*, c. 1500, boxwood, 7.6 cm, Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, <https://boxwood.ago.ca/object/joseph-and-potiphars-wife-judgement-paris>



Figure 3.6, English, *Madder and Belladonna. Pea with flower and pods* in *The Tudor Pattern Book*, c. 1520-1530, parchment, 41 x 28 cm, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, fol. 13r, <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/385c0fdd-03ce-42c7-b43f-369003bee8f3/surfaces/95cc072c-7291-4f4f-a3f0-0cc72e056562/>



Figure 3.7, English, *Pea and Rose. Naked youth with bagpipes, naked child with pipe and tabor* in *The Tudor Pattern Book*, c. 1520-1530, parchment, 41 x 28 cm, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, fol. 24v, <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/385c0fdd-03ce-42c7-b43f-369003bee8f3/surfaces/21a9d8e6-4a58-41b5-a431-8f8e99e3f554/>



Figure 3.8, Limbourg brothers, *January* in *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, 1413-1416, ink on vellum, 30 x 21.5 cm, Musée Condé, Chantilly, <https://smarthistory.org/limbourg-brothers-tres-riches-heures-du-duc-de-berry/>



Figure 3.9, Flemish, *St. Nicholas and boys in pickling tub*, floral border, text with border in MS. *Douce 8*, late 15th century, parchment, Medieval Manuscripts in Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, p. 391-392, <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/5ea19124-c875-4486-a120-4e8263641d04/surfaces/588714d3-dcd3-4417-b570-23cdef1a1f24/>



Figure 3.10, Flemish, *St. Christopher carrying Christ*, pea border in *MS. Douce 8*, late 15th century, parchment, Medieval Manuscripts in Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, p. 393-394,

<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/5ea19124-c875-4486-a120-4e8263641d04/surfaces/65c1fc45-6ac9-4e85-80bb-e3750f819e56/>



Figure 3.11, Flemish, *Tournament before Arthur* in *MS. Douce 383*, before 1500, parchment, Medieval Manuscripts in Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, fol. 16r,

<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/de11a7fc-9a2a-4809-8a76-5a831f85fd04/surfaces/68ff0ac9-f989-4fcb-97cf-24b79696b8ce/>



Figure 3.12, Master of the Morgan Infancy Cycle, *Initial with border of pea blossom and pods in Additional 50005*, parchment, 12.5 x 9 cm, British Library Digitised Manuscripts, London, fol. 23,  
<https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=6488&CollID=27&NSTart=50005>



Figure 3.13, Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Catherine of Cleves Praying to the Virgin and Child and Annunciation to Joachim in Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, c. 1440, vellum, 19.2 x 13 cm, The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, fol.1v-2r,  
<https://www.themorgan.org/manuscript/76941>





Figure 3.14, Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Singing Angels* in *Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, c. 1440, vellum, 19.2 x 13 cm, The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, fol.10v-11r, <https://www.themorgan.org/manuscript/76941>



Figure 3.15, Master of Catherine of Cleves, *St. Ambrose and St. Augustine* in *Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, c. 1440, vellum, 19.2 x 13 cm, The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, fol. 244-245, <https://www.themorgan.org/manuscript/76941>



Figure 3.16, Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple and Joseph Designated as the Husband of the Virgin* in *Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, c. 1440, vellum, 19.2 x 13 cm, The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, fol. 23v-24r, <https://www.themorgan.org/manuscript/76941>



Figure 3.17, Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Christ before Caiaphas and Christ Mocked* in *Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, c. 1440, vellum, 19.2 x 13 cm, The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, fol. 52v-53r, <https://www.themorgan.org/manuscript/76941>



Figure 3.18, Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Last Judgment* and *Man of Sorrows Petitioned by Penitents* in *Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, c. 1440, vellum, 19.2 x 13 cm, The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, fol. 28, <https://www.themorgan.org/manuscript/76941>



Figure 3.19, Gentile da Fabriano, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1423, tempera on panel, 283 x 300 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, <https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/adoration-of-the-magi>



Figure 3.20, Workshop of the Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Peapods* in *Walters Ms. W.782, Van Alphen Hours*, mid-15th century, parchment and vellum, 14.5 x 11 cm, Digitized Walters Manuscripts, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, fol. 58r,  
<https://www.thedigitalwalters.org/Data/WaltersManuscripts/html/W782/description.html>



Figure 3.21, Master of Mary of Burgundy Hours, *Annunciation to Mary* in *Book of Hours of Mary of Burgundy*, 1470-1479, parchment, 22.5 x 16.3 cm, Austrian National Library, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, p. 44,  
[https://search.onb.ac.at/primo-explore/fulldisplay?vid=ONB&search\\_scope=ONB\\_gesamtbestand&tab=default\\_tab&docid=ONB\\_alma21295848150003338&lang=en\\_US&context=L&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&query=addsrcrid,exact,AC13946376](https://search.onb.ac.at/primo-explore/fulldisplay?vid=ONB&search_scope=ONB_gesamtbestand&tab=default_tab&docid=ONB_alma21295848150003338&lang=en_US&context=L&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&query=addsrcrid,exact,AC13946376)

## Mary of Burgundy Hours 2



Figure 3.22, Master of Mary of Burgundy Hours, *Libra* in *Book of Hours of Mary of Burgundy*, 1470-1479, parchment, 22.5 x 16.3 cm, Austrian National Library, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, p. 26,

[https://search.onb.ac.at/primo-explore/fulldisplay?vid=ONB&search\\_scope=ONB\\_gesamtbestand&tab=default\\_tab&docid=ONB\\_alma21295848150003338&lang=en\\_US&context=L&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&query=addsrcrid,exact,AC13946376](https://search.onb.ac.at/primo-explore/fulldisplay?vid=ONB&search_scope=ONB_gesamtbestand&tab=default_tab&docid=ONB_alma21295848150003338&lang=en_US&context=L&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&query=addsrcrid,exact,AC13946376)



Figure 3.23, *Marginal Monkey* in *Book of Hours of Joanna I of Castile*, 1486-1506, parchment, 11 x 8 cm, British Library Digitised Manuscripts, London, fol. 109r, [https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\\_MS\\_18852](https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_18852)



Figure 3.24, Ghent, *Hours of Duke Adolph of Cleves*, *Walters Ms. W.439*, c. 1480-90, parchment, 11.7 x 16.9 cm, Digitized Walters Manuscripts, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, fol. 145v, <https://www.thedigitalwalters.org/Data/WaltersManuscripts/html/W439/description.html>



Figure 3.25, Albrecht Dürer, *Virgin and Child with the Monkey*, c. 1498, engraving, 19.1 x 12.1 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/391053>



Figure 3.26, Ghent, *Hours of Duke Adolph of Cleves*, *Walters Ms. W.439*, c. 1480-90, parchment, 11.7 x 16.9 cm, Digitized Walters Manuscripts, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, fol. 205r, <https://www.thedigitalwalters.org/Data/WaltersManuscripts/html/W439/description.html>



Figure 3.27, Master of Mary of Burgundy, Lieven van Lathem, and Nicolas Spierinc, *Saint George and the Dragon* in *The Prayer Book of Charles the Bold*, c. 1469-1490, parchment, 12.4 x 9.2 cm, The Getty Museum, New York, fol. 67v, <https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103RWT>



Figure 3.28, Master of Mary of Burgundy, Lieven van Lathem, and Nicolas Spierinc, *Charles the Bold Presented by an Angel in The Prayer Book of Charles the Bold*, c. 1469-1490, parchment, 12.4 x 9.2 cm, The Getty Museum, New York, fol. 68v, <https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103RWT>



Figure 3.29, Ghent, *Peapods in Book of Hours of Philip the Handsome*, c. 1490-1500, parchment, 21.1 x 14.5 cm, Digitized Walters Manuscripts, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, fol. 75r, <https://www.thedigitalwalters.org/Data/WaltersManuscripts/html/W440/description.html>





Figure 3.30, *Peapod* in *Book of Hours of Joanna I of Castile*, 1486-1506, parchment, 11 x 8 cm, British Library Digitised Manuscripts, London, fol. 139r, [https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\\_MS\\_18852](https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_18852)

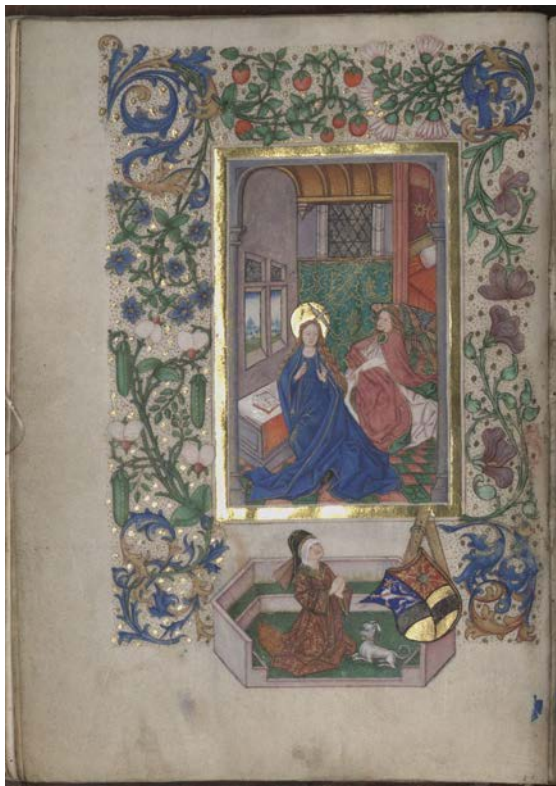


Figure 3.31, *Annunciation to Mary* in *Prayer Book of Machtild of Hessen/Princess Sibylle von Kleve*, c. 1489, parchment, 17.5 x 14.4 cm, fol. 13v, Digital Library, Münchener Digitalisierungszentrum, <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb00049344?page=,1>



Figure 3.32, German, *The Virgin of the Flowering Pea*, c. 1425, paint on walnut, 70.3 x 49.8 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, <https://www.gallery.ca/collection/artwork/the-virgin-of-the-flowering-pea>



Figure 3.33, Jan van Eyck, *Arnolfini Portrait*, 1434, oil paint on oak, 82.2 x 60 cm, The National Gallery, London, <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/jan-van-eyck-the-arnolfini-portrait>



Figure 3.34, Jan van Eyck, *Detail of Arnolfini Portrait*, 1434, oil paint on oak, 82.2 x 60 cm, The National Gallery, London, <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/jan-van-eyck-the-arnolfini-portrait>



Figure 4.1, Adam Dircksz, *Peapod with Ten Biblical Scenes*, c. 1500, boxwood, 10 cm. Berlin, Kunstgewerbemuseum, <https://boxwood.ago.ca/object/peapod-ten-biblical-scenes>



Figure 4.2, North German, *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife; Judgment of Paris*, c. 1500, boxwood, 7.6 cm, Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, <https://boxwood.ago.ca/object/joseph-and-potiphars-wife-judgement-paris>



Figure 4.3, “Common box: Common, or English, box (*Buxus sempervirens*),” Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/plant/boxwood-plant-family>



Figure 4.4, Master of Mary of Burgundy Hours, *Rosary in Book of Hours of Mary of Burgundy*, 1470-1479, parchment, 22.5 x 16.3 cm, Austrian National Library, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, p. 92, [https://digital.onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL\\_7456416&order=1&view=SINGLE](https://digital.onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL_7456416&order=1&view=SINGLE)



Figure 4.5, Flemish or French, *Paternoster Bead from a Rosary or Chaplet with Christ, a Young Woman, and Death*, 1500-1530, ivory, 5.1 x 4.6 cm, The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, <https://art.thewalters.org/detail/23462/pendant-from-a-rosary-or-chaplet-with-christ-the-virgin-and-death/>



Figure 4.6, German or Netherlandish, *Prayer Bead ("Nut") in the Shape of the Head of the Virgin, Opens to Show Crucifixion*, ca. 1510-1530, boxwood, 5.8 x 4.5 x 5 cm, The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, <https://art.thewalters.org/detail/10302/prayer-bead-nut-in-the-shape-of-the-head-of-the-virgin-opens-to-show-crucifixion/>



Figure 4.7, South Netherlandish, *Decade Rosary made for Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon*, 1509-1526, boxwood, 47.2 x 5.7 cm, The Devonshire Collection, Art Gallery of Ontario, <https://boxwood.ago.ca/object/decade-rosary-0>



Figure 4.8, Netherlandish, *Miniature Altarpiece with the Crucifixion*, early 16th century, boxwood, 15 x 7.6 x 3.2 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/464439>



Figure 4.9, Netherlandish, *Composite prayer bead from Half of A Prayer Bead with Jesus Carrying the Cross*, early 16th century, boxwood, 6.8 x 6.4 x 3.4 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/464446>



Figure 4.10, *Tools of Ottaviano Jannella*, c. 1654-1660, Thomson Collection, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, <https://boxwood.ago.ca/object/monumentino-sculpture-tools-and-eyeglasses-ottaviano-jannella-portrait-jannella>



Figure 4.11, Netherlandish, *Composite prayer bead, disassembled from Half of A Prayer Bead with Jesus Carrying the Cross*, early 16th century, boxwood, 6.8 x 6.4 x 3.4 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/464446>

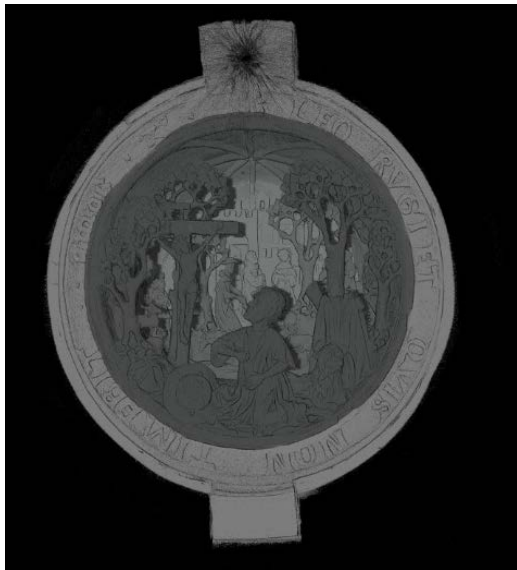


Figure 4.12, Netherlandish, *Composite CT-scan of St Jerome in the desert; St. Jerome blessing supplicants*, 1500-1530, boxwood with metal fittings, 5 x 5 cm, Thomson Collection, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, <https://boxwood.ago.ca/object/st-jerome-desert-st-jerome-blessing-supplicants>





Figure 4.13, South Netherlandish, “M” *Life of St. Margaret*, before 1524, boxwood, 8.7 x 9.7 cm, Musée national de la Renaissance, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, <https://boxwood.ago.ca/object/m-life-st-margaret>



Figure 4.14, Johann Georg Hainz, *A Collector's Cabinet*, 1664, oil on canvas, 127.5 x 102 cm, <https://www.rct.uk/collection/400918/a-collectors-cabinet>



Figure 4.15, Netherlandish, *Letter P with the Legend of Saint Philip*, c. 1500-1506, boxwood, 7.1 x 9.9 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/738679>



Figure 4.16, South Netherlandish, *"F" with The Nine Worthies*, before 1524, boxwood, 7.5 x 8 x 1.3 cm, Musée national de la Renaissance, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, <https://boxwood.ago.ca/object/f-nine-worthies>



Figure 4.17, *Glasses of Ottaviano Jannella*, c. 1654-1660, Thomson Collection, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, <https://boxwood.ago.ca/object/monumentino-sculpture-tools-and-eyeglasses-ottaviano-jannella-portrait-jannella>



Figure 4.18, *Sculpture by Ottaviano Jannella*, c. 1654-1660, boxwood, Thomson Collection, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, <https://boxwood.ago.ca/object/monumentino-sculpture-tools-and-eyeglasses-ottaviano-jannella-portrait-jannella>



Figure 4.19, Properzia de' Rossi, *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*, 1520s, Marble, Museo di San Petronio, Bologna, Italy



Figure 4.20, Netherlandish, *Box for Prayer nut with silver case*, c. 1500-1530, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/search/objects?set=BK-2010-16#/BK-2010-16,0>



Figure 4.21, Netherlandish, *Nude Woman on Prayer nut with silver case*, c. 1500-1530, boxwood in gilded silver case, 5 x 4.8 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, <https://boxwood.ago.ca/object/nativity-adoration-magi-2>



Figure 4.22, *Monkey on Prayer nut with silver case*, c. 1500-1530, boxwood in gilded silver case, 5 x 4.8 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, <https://boxwood.ago.ca/object/nativity-adoration-magi-2>



Figure 4.23, *Nativity and Adoration of the Magi in Prayer nut with silver case*, c. 1500-1530, boxwood in gilded silver case, 5 x 4.8 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, <https://boxwood.ago.ca/object/nativity-adoration-magi-2>



Figure 4.24, German, *Pomander*, c. 1500, silver-gilt, 3.6 x 2.5 cm, The Victoria & Albert Museum, London, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O105969/pomander-unknown/>



Figure 5.1, Adam Dircksz, *Peapod with Ten Biblical Scenes*, c. 1500, boxwood, 10 cm. Berlin, Kunstgewerbemuseum, <https://boxwood.ago.ca/object/peapod-ten-biblical-scenes>



Figure 5.2, Master of the Bartholomew Altar, *St. Christina* in *The St. Bartholomew Altarpiece*, c. 1500-1510, oil on canvas, Alte Pinakothek, Munich, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/adavey/49464249627/in/photostream/>



Figure 5.3, French, *Breast Ornament*, c. 1620-1630, gold, diamond, and enamel, 12.4 x 7.4 x 3 cm, The Victoria & Albert Museum, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O33884/breast-ornament-unknown/>



Figure 5.4, *Large oval goldsmith's bouquet*, 1624, etching, Paris: Alexandre Vivot, Bibliotheque nationale de France. In Marika Knowles, "Ornament in the Kitchen Garden," 25.



Figure 5.5, *Plate 2 from Bouquets d'orfèvrerie en cosse de pois avec en bas des paysages et figures*, 1626, etching, Paris: Balthasar Moncornet after Hans Georg Mosbach, 12.3 x 9.4cm, Bibliotheque nationale de France. In Marika Knowles, "Ornament in the Kitchen Garden," 11.



Figure 5.6, *Man with trident and ewer composed of peapod ornament*, 1628, engraving, Raphael Custos after Philip Jakob Har, 10 x 8 cm. In Peter Fuhring, “The Peapod Style: Prints by Parisian Goldsmiths,” 69.



Figure 5.7, Northern Netherlands, *Miniature tabernacle and case*, 1510-1525, boxwood, 22.2 x 14.7 x 13 cm, British Museum, London, <http://wb.britishmuseum.org/MCN6655#29293001>





Figure 5.8, Lucas van Leyden, *Joseph Escaping Potiphar's Wife*, 1512, engraving, 12.6 x 16.3 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, <https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/22837>



Figure 5.9, Marcantonio Raimondi after Raphael, c. 1515-1525, engraving, 20.7 x 24.1 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/342525>



Figure 5.10, Sebald Beham, *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife* (“Joseph, the faithful servant. and the tamer of lust”), 1544, engraving, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.4384.html#bibliography>



Figure 5.11, *The Judgment of Paris*, *Lehrs IV*, no 90, c.1460, engraving, Munich: The Master of the Banderoles. In Helmut Nickel, “The Judgment of Paris by Lucas Cranach the Elder: Nature, Allegory, and Alchemy,” 121.



Figure 5.12, *The Judgment of Paris*, *Lehrs IV*, no 91, c.1460, engraving, Munich: The Master of the Banderoles. In Helmut Nickel, “The Judgment of Paris by Lucas Cranach the Elder: Nature, Allegory, and Alchemy,” 121.



Figure 5.13, *The Judgment of Paris*, 1503, woodcut illustration, likely Johannes Hoch. In Helmut Nickel, “The Judgment of Paris by Lucas Cranach the Elder: Nature, Allegory, and Alchemy,” 122.



Figure 5.14, *The Judgment of Paris* illustration in *Del alchimia* by Valentin Hernworst, 1526, Leiden: Johannes Hoch. In Helmut Nickel, “The Judgment of Paris by Lucas Cranach the Elder: Nature, Allegory, and Alchemy,” 122.



Figure 5.15, Jan van Eyck, *Middle panel in The Ghent Altarpiece*, 1432, oil on wood, 5.2 x 3.75 meters, Saint Bavo Cathedral, <http://clostertovaneyck.kikirpa.be/>



Figure 5.16, Lucas Cranach the Elder, *The Judgment of Paris*, 1508, woodcut, 36.5 x 25.7 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/625019>



Figure 5.17, Master I.P., *The Judgment of Paris*, c. 1530, pearwood, 23.5 x 17.9 cm, The Victoria & Albert Museum, London, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O158404/the-judgement-of-paris-relief-master-i-p/>



Figure 5.18, French, *The Judgement of Paris and David's Message to Bathsheba*, c. 1520-1530, ivory, 14.8 x 13.3 cm, The Victoria & Albert Museum, London, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O102749/the-judgement-of-paris-and-comb-unknown/>



Figure 5.19, French, *The Judgement of Paris and David's Message to Bathsheba*, c. 1520-1530, ivory, 14.8 x 13.3 cm, The Victoria & Albert Museum, London, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O102749/the-judgement-of-paris-and-comb-unknown/>



Figure 5.20, French, *David and Bathsheba and the Judgement of Paris*, c. 1530-1550, ivory, 12 x

16.2 cm,

<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O166401/david-and-bathsheba-and-the-comb-unknown/>



Figure 5.21, French, *David and Bathsheba and the Judgement of Paris*, c. 1530-1550, ivory, 12 x 16.2 cm,

<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O166401/david-and-bathsheba-and-the-comb-unknown/>

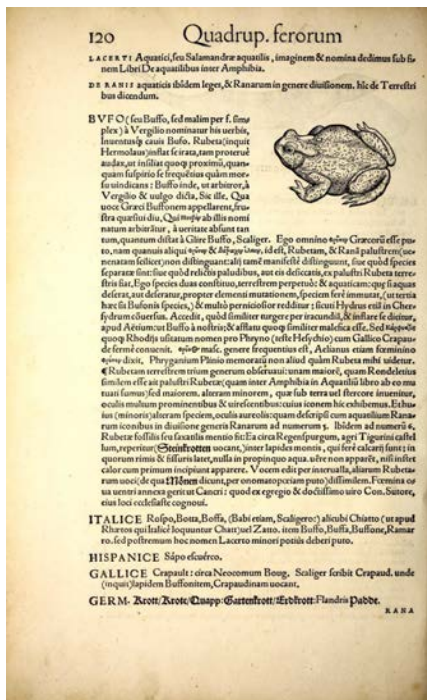


Figure 5.22, Conrad Gesner, *Bufo*, c. 1516-1665,  
<https://in.pinterest.com/pin/535858055646789113/>



Figure 5.23, English, *Rats, toad, a twig with two green leaves* in *The Tudor Pattern Book*, c. 1520-1530, parchment, 41 x 28 cm, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, fol. 41v, <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/385c0fdd-03ce-42c7-b43f-369003bee8f3/surfaces/dba047d3-939d-4d7a-b722-327fd5eff7d0/>



Figure 5.24, Northern Netherlands, *Devotional pendant*, 1510-1514, boxwood, 4.7 x 1.8 x 4.7 cm, The British Museum, London, <http://wb.britishmuseum.org/MCN10352#1509842001>



Figure 5.25, South Netherlandish, *Miniature Altarpiece, Crucifixion*, 1511, boxwood, 25.1 cm, The British Museum, London, <https://boxwood.ago.ca/object/miniature-altarpiece-crucifixion>





Figure 5.26, *A Snuff Box with Erotic Scene*, late 18th century, 7.5 x 2.5 cm, Bukowskis, Stockholm, <https://www.bukowskis.com/en/lots/820616-dosa-erotica-1700-talets-slut>



Figure 5.27, Samuel van Hoogstraten, *A Peepshow with Views of the Interior of a Dutch House*, 1655-1660, oil and egg on wood, 58 x 88 x 60.5 cm, National Gallery, London, <https://jhna.org/articles/seeing-outside-the-box-reexamining-the-top-of-samuel-van-hoogstratens-london-perspective-box/>



Figure 5.28, Samuel van Hoogstraten, *A Peepshow with Views of the Interior of a Dutch House*, 1655-1660, oil and egg on wood, 58 x 88 x 60.5 cm, National Gallery, London, <https://jhna.org/articles/seeing-outside-the-box-reexamining-the-top-of-samuel-van-hoogstratens-london-perspective-box/>



Figure 5.29, Greco-Roman, *Priapus*, 1st century, fresco, Pompeii, Naples National Archaeological Museum, <https://www.theoi.com/Georgikos/Priapos.html>



Figure 5.30, Peter Wtewael, *Kitchen Scene*, 1620s, oil on canvas, 113.7 x 160 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/437956>



Figure 5.31, Workshop of the Master of Catherine of Cleves, *Molluscs* in *Walters Ms. W.782, Van Alphen Hours*, mid-15th century, parchment and vellum, 14.5 x 11 cm, Digitized Walters Manuscripts, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, fol. 113r, <https://www.thedigitalwalters.org/Data/WaltersManuscripts/html/W782/description.html>