

# The Use of Dürer Prints as Sources for Italian Renaissance Maiolica

Giorgio Vasari's account of how Dürer's work was first received in Italy is central to the argument of this paper, and is therefore given in full:

But it would take too long to list all the works by Albert Dürer's hand. For now, it is enough to know that having designed a Passion of Christ in 36 woodblocks, and then having cut them, he made an agreement with Marcantonio Bolognese to issue these sheets jointly, and so it happened in Venice. On account of this, many marvellous things were done in Italy through the agency of these prints, as described below. While Francesco Francia concerned himself with painting in Bologna, among his many followers was a youth called Marcantonio, who, being more gifted than the others, was brought on by Francia. Since he had been with Francia for many years, and was much loved by him, Marcantonio took on the name of Francia's family. Marcantonio had a better sense of artistic skill (*disegno*) than his master, and handled the burin with ease and delicacy. He made, because they were much used at that time, belt-fittings and other nielloed [silver] things, which were very beautiful, since he was outstanding in this particular technique. Seized, as many people are, with the desire to travel the world and see different things and the ways in which craftsmen worked, Marcantonio was sent by Francia with good grace to Venice, where he was well-received by the craftsmen of that city. Meanwhile some Flemish merchants had arrived in Venice with many woodcuts and copper engravings by Albert Dürer, which Marcantonio saw in the Piazza of San Marco. He was stunned by Dürer's style and technique, and he spent almost all the money he had brought with him from Bologna on these prints. Amongst those he bought were the Passion of Christ cut in 36 woodblocks in octavo which had been printed shortly before by the said Albert Dürer. This series began with the sin of Adam and the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise by the Angel, and continued to the Descent of the Holy Spirit. Marcantonio having considered how much honour and profit could be gained though the practice of this art in Italy determined to do this with all care and diligence, and thus began to counterfeit those prints by Albert, studying the method of cutting and everything about the prints that he had bought. These copies were held in high reputation on account of their novelty and beauty, and everybody sought to have some. Having then counterfeited in copper engravings, the same size as the woodblocks which Albert had cut, the entire Passion and Life of Christ in 36 sheets, and put on them the sign that Albert used on his works, ie: AD, he succeeded to such an extent in making works in the same manner that, not knowing that they had been made by Marcantonio, people believed them to be the work of Albert, and they were bought and sold as his. News of this having been sent to Albert in Flanders, and having sent him one of the counterfeits, Albert was so enraged that he set off from Flanders and went to Venice, and took recourse to the law at the Signoria, taking legal action against Marcantonio. However, Albert only succeeded in preventing Marcantonio from using his name and monogram on his works.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the various contradictions and inaccuracies in Vasari's account, the fact that Marcantonio certainly did publish his own engraved version of Dürer's *Small Passion* at an early date is evidence for the extraordinary vogue in Italy for the German artist's work during the first decades of the 16th century.<sup>2</sup> Dürer was that virtually unique phenomenon in the 16th century, a northern artist who, whilst essentially

remaining based north of the Alps and continuing to work in a broadly northern European idiom, nevertheless succeeded in exercising significant influence on Italian taste and design. Whilst a painting such as the *Feast of the Rose Garlands* enjoyed huge fame within its local context in Venice, it was essentially through the medium of the print that Dürer's fame and influence were spread further afield through Italy. It is difficult for us today to appreciate how revolutionary and exciting this medium must have appeared around 1500, when the large-scale production of relatively inexpensive prints was still comparatively new. However, something of a Renaissance man's sense of excitement is conveyed very well in a passage from the *Ricordi* of Fra Sabba da Castiglione, a moralist and member of the Order of the Knights of Saint John. In his book, Sabba describes how he settles himself in his garden in the little pottery-making town to Faenza to savour his latest acquisition:

Some years ago, in the scorching month of July, towards the hour of None, I found myself in my wild, rustic and poorly-tended garden at La Magione, at the foot of the ever-green Monte Formicone. I had fled beneath the dense and cool shade of trees which I can boast of having planted myself, to escape both the heat and mid-day drowsiness; in order, despite my age, not to give way to Idleness, my natural enemy. I had bestirred myself to look at a print by Albrecht Dürer, absolutely divine, and which had newly-arrived from Germany. While with delight and great pleasure I was admiring and considering the figures, animals, perspectives, houses, distant views and landscapes, and other marvellous representations of things which would astonish a Protogenes or an Apelles, not to mention Simon della Lazarina., along came some young men, sons of good citizens of the district, well-built and dressed, reverent, modest and all of them well-read: these, after making duly polite bows and greetings, sat down and began to have some good discussions among themselves. Hearing them, and finding them more like wise old men than inexperienced youths, I rolled up my print and began to listen to them attentively.<sup>3</sup>

Sabba was a discerning collector, albeit on a modest scale.<sup>4</sup> His description is of course a literary construction, setting the scene for a dialogue in a garden, but it does give a sense of immediacy. We do not know which print he was admiring, nor does this greatly matter. More importantly, Sabba's listing of things to be admired in a Dürer print actually evokes the richness of detail and visual sophistication which contemporaries so much admired in Dürer. We know that Sabba himself owned prints as part of his substantial library and small art collection in Faenza. The tantalising detail about rolling up or furling this particular print, perhaps in order to protect it, before joining in the conversation gives a vivid sense of how such expensive prints were treasured and handled by those who owned them. We know for example that some Italian collectors, such as Gabriel Vendramin, kept their prints in rolls in their studies,<sup>5</sup> though the evidence of Sabba's two wills suggest that he himself preferred to keep

them in albums.<sup>6</sup> But beyond all this, Sabba's loving description provides an intellectual context for the contemporary reception of Dürer prints in Italy.

This is not the place to discuss the taste for Dürer's prints among Italian collectors in general, a fascinating subject on which there is much more to be said. My emphasis here is on their use by the artists and artisans who worked in the maiolica pottery workshops in Sabba's adopted town of Faenza, and in other Italian pottery centres. Dürer's prints were a rich source of inspiration for other artists, from painters such as Pontormo to goldsmiths such as the Mantuan Nicolò Possovino, whose study room or *studiolo*, inventoried in 1541, contained 'un libro de Passione de Alberto Duro'.<sup>7</sup> The very low survival rate of Italian goldsmiths' work means that we have very little direct evidence of Dürer's designs being used as sources, although one or two works in bronze, such as an interesting gilt-bronze plaque from the Ashmolean, showing *Christ washing the Disciples' Feet* and probably made in Padua in the circle of Riccio, may well reflect goldsmiths' originals at one remove.<sup>8</sup> We are luckier in terms of survival when we come to maiolica, to which I shall now turn.

This paper is based on analysis of a core group of 14 maiolica dishes and plaques, of which I will only illustrate a few. These examples are mostly drawn from catalogues of public collections in Europe and the USA, mainly outside Italy, which may explain why they have not been consistently studied there. The key pieces are in Britain and in Germany. Some pieces after Dürer, particularly those I have not seen or handled, have been left out;<sup>9</sup> and others omitted because I did not have space to illustrate them, and hence analyse them in detail.<sup>10</sup> I hope that this article may help to flush out other examples from public and private collections as yet unpublished, or at the least unknown to me.

Much of the work done for this paper draws upon published material. However, beyond two pioneering articles by Robert Schmidt, published during and just after World War II, the assemblage of maiolica after Dürer designs gathered together here has never been analysed as a single group before, or so closely scrutinised in terms of the way in which Dürer prints have been used as sources.<sup>11</sup> Most of these pieces have been discussed in collections catalogues or in articles in terms of attribution to a particular workshop or pottery centre; something which has become extremely problematic in recent years. My aim here is not to get bogged down in questions of attribution. It is rather to describe the pieces in detail, and to assess what we see on them as a way of analysing the reception of Dürer by Italian maiolica painters.

The dating of the pieces in the core group ranges from 1505–28. There are only two dated examples, one dated 1519<sup>12</sup> and one 1525<sup>13</sup> with a cluster of later examples of which two are dated 1528<sup>14</sup> and 1543.<sup>15</sup> This would seem to back up the observation that the peak of Dürer's influence on maiolica painters is in fact rather later than is generally supposed, which tallies with the evidence of French Limoges enamels.<sup>16</sup> The moment at which Dürer prints appear on maiolica is at the end of the period between 1475 and 1525 at which a new narrative style of painting, *istoriato*, was being

developed on Italian tin-glazed pottery.<sup>17</sup> It is not by chance that his works were chosen to exemplify this new art form, one which, in the eyes of contemporary commentators, surpassed anything that the ancient Romans or Greeks had achieved in terms of complexity of line, composition, and the use of colour.<sup>18</sup> Upmarket maiolica, of the kind shown, here had higher aesthetic than financial value, and was enjoyed in very restricted social circles. The pieces had high status, partly conferred by the technical ingenuity of their making, partly by the perceived dignity of pictorial or graphic sources used. The elevated nature of the subjects depicted also conferred high status on a new artistic medium.<sup>19</sup> Dürer's designs supplied maiolica painters with intensely dramatic narratives on a small scale. The breadth and balance of Dürer's prints, the way in which a scene is carefully centred, framed within a classical interior or placed in a landscape, made them a perfect source for maiolica painters. Those unsure of their figure drawing could use the subtly draped figures or nudes as models; those uncertain of the science of perspective could use the interior scenes to give depth to their compositions. Different degrees of editorial skill can be seen in the way in which elements of a print were excerpted or adapted to fit a circular field, one which moreover might curve upwards at the outer edge, proving a challenge to any pictorial composition. Borders – of the latest Italianate classical design – could detract from or enhance the central composition. The new element is of course the use of colour. Generally the outlines are mid-blue and the shadows light blue, giving a blue-violet tonality to the whole whatever the white highlights and touches of brilliant colour. This characteristic palette typifies the earliest phase of *istoriato*.<sup>20</sup>

Dürer's prints were not of course the only ones to be used by Italian maiolica painters as sources in this early period of *istoriato*. Three superb pieces in British public collections indicate the dependence of pottery painters on other printmakers, such as Lucas van Leyden (1489–1533). His print dated 1509, the *Conversion of Saul* (Hollstein 107) inspired two particularly fine pieces of maiolica of c. 1520, which have been published by John Mallet and Michael J. Brody.<sup>21</sup> A unique dish in the British Museum after a print by Martin Schongauer (c. 1440/50–91), the 'fine Martin' so much admired by the young Dürer, exemplifies early *istoriato* at its best (Pl. 1).<sup>22</sup> Probably painted in Faenza, near Bologna, around 1505–15, it shows the *Dormition of the Virgin* originally after the print signed by Schongauer (Pl. 2) made around 1470–75,<sup>23</sup> via a reversed copy.<sup>24</sup> The fact that Schongauer's composition was mediated via a reversed copy is significant, in that most of the Dürer compositions to be found on maiolica were probably also mediated. Scenes from the two most popular series, the *Life of Virgin* (1503/5–10; Meder 188–207) and the *Small Passion* (1509–11; Meder 125–61) were generally known in Italy through the faithful copies in engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi (c. 1470/82–1527/34)<sup>25</sup> executed shortly after each series appeared. It is therefore difficult to determine the exact source for maiolica after these prints other than by scrutinising the smallest telling details.

Starting with maiolica after the *Small Passion*, the earliest piece is this bowl in the British Museum, painted in Faenza around 1510–20 with Christ manhandled by soldiers

at the centre (Pl. 3).<sup>26</sup> The bowl itself is finely-potted, delicate and light to the touch; a feature of the best maiolica which was widely admired by contemporaries.<sup>27</sup> The scene is skilfully centred in the well of the bowl. The three figures have been copied almost exactly as excerpts from Dürer's *Christ before Annas* in the *Small Passion* (Meder 137; Pl. 4). Most unusually, the tension between the figures has been maintained in the maiolica copy. The architecture of the interior in which the scene is set has been copied from Dürer at the left but made more complex to substitute for the elimination of the other figures in the print. This editing emphasises the drama of the subject, despite the fact that the large column in the background, which forms the centre of Dürer's composition, is pushed to the left in the maiolica bowl. Colour has been kept to a minimum, with yellow, green and matt brown used for the flanking figures within the blueish tonality of the scene as a whole. The most striking feature perhaps is the border, with masks, putti and dolphin-headed tendrils on a deep cobalt blue ground. This decoration comes under the general heading of *grottesche*, ornament derived ultimately from ancient Roman wall paintings then to be seen in buildings underground, hence its name, which translates as 'grotto ornament'.<sup>28</sup>

Contemporary Italians perceived this type of ornament as being 'in the antique manner'. Here it is in striking contrast with the delicate, perceptively northern style of the scene at the centre. The border however counterbalances the central scene without overwhelming it, in contrast to other pieces of the same type. There is a sense in which two up-to-the-minute designs are being used on this dish; the Dürer scene, and the fashionable *all'antica* border. The inscription, *IN FAENCA*, on the reverse boldly proclaims the place of production and advertises the bowl as the work of a leading pottery centre of the time. It is a feature which has long been valued. As a former owner of this bowl, the Parisian dealer Henri Delange, commented in 1853, 'This piece has the further advantage of bearing on its base the name of Faenza, written in capitals, and a decoration on its reverse which one finds on many unmarked pieces, which should serve to identify them'.<sup>29</sup> This is one of the earliest indications of origin on maiolica and is surely intended to promote a sophisticated product and, by implication, its anonymous maker.

Weak in comparison is a slightly later and much damaged dish of around 1520, from the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, with *Christ Washing the Disciples' Feet* (Pl. 5).<sup>30</sup> It has been most recently described by Julia Poole in her catalogue of the Fitzwilliam's maiolica.<sup>31</sup> As Poole has noted, the composition is either a free adaptation of the same subject in Dürer's *Small Passion* (Meder 134; Pl. 6) or from Marcantonio's engraved copy of it (Bartsch 593). The painter has made the scene symmetrical by adding a door to the left and figures to fill out the circular composition on each side. He has added a window at the back with a landscape view, and has shaded the back wall to give a sense of depth. The grotesque border on a bright blue ground with paired griffins, tendrils and palmettes dominates the dish in contrast to the earlier piece we have just seen. This type of border on a mid-blue (*berettino*) ground became standard for a particular class of Faenza wares between about 1524

and 1540. It is a pedestrian work compared with the previous bowl.

Very different and much more accomplished is a dish in Bologna showing *Christ before Pilate* (Pl. 7).<sup>32</sup> Painted in Faenza around 1520–25, this dish, as Carmen Ravanello Guidotti has observed, has the blueish tonality typical of this class of maiolica, but here highlighted with turquoise blue and violet as well as the accustomed brown and yellow-green. The scene from the *Small Passion* (Meder 140; Pl. 8) either taken directly or via Marcantonio's copy (Bartsch 596; Pl. 9) has been simplified and framed within an archway reminiscent of those found in Dürer's earlier *Life of the Virgin* series. The left-hand soldier stands incongruously on a ledge at the front of the composition which makes nonsense of the spatial relationships and leaves Christ suspended in the air. The architecture is otherwise copied exactly with blue shading like that used in the British Museum bowl. The painter has omitted the landscape at the back centre, and the dog at the foot of the columns; he has also altered the hands of the figure on the right. The skill of the painter is shown in the way in which the design is fitted onto the curved edge of the dish, and in the boldness of using the Dürer print on the whole surface without a border.

From these three pieces based on the *Small Passion*, we move onto two derived from the earlier *Life of the Virgin* series. First, a plate in Berlin with *Christ taking leave of his Mother*, probably painted in Faenza around 1515–20 (Pl. 10).<sup>33</sup> As Hausmann has noted, the central scene is taken from the *Life of the Virgin* (Meder 204) series or from Marcantonio's copy – complete with AD monogram – of around 1506 (Bartsch 636; Pl. 11).<sup>34</sup> The figures are copied exactly but are flaccid as so often in the maiolica copies. The wooden structure centring Dürer's composition has been omitted in favour of a landscape which is the maiolica painter's own. The white border around the scene detaches it from the trophy ornament on the border.

The second piece derived from the *Life of the Virgin* series, which is in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, is the most accomplished of all the pieces shown so far (Pl. 12).<sup>35</sup> Painted in Faenza around 1515–25, the dish depicts the *Presentation of Christ in the Temple*. It is, I believe, derived not from the Dürer original (Meder 200) but from the engraved copy by Marcantonio (Bartsch 631; Pl. 13). The fringe on the altar cloth is thick as in Marcantonio's engraving, and the head of the servant with the candle in the background is shown behind the candle as in Marcantonio's copy. The AD monogram, which appears in the Marcantonio engraving, has been copied here, uniquely on maiolica after Dürer. As noted by Bernard Rackham in 1940, the painter has added the man on the left with a high hat and the woman on the right, both derived from another woodcut in the series, *The Marriage of the Virgin* (Meder 194; Pl. 14) to fill out the circular composition. The floor has a tiled pattern to lead the eye into the composition, otherwise the classical architecture of the woodcut has been beautifully copied onto the dish with its upturned edge with great skill. White highlights mould the columns of the blue-shaded building. The colours articulate the composition in a carefully-controlled way, ranging from brown red and yellow to green and touches of white. Given the level of

accomplishment, it is no surprise that the back of the dish is marked with a well-known workshop mark of a B in blue within a yellow ball crossed in blue. This is probably the mark of the Bergantini family workshop of Faenza, which was active between 1502–58 and which is documented in the archives. A famous dish in Faenza, clearly by another hand, is also inscribed in full by Pietro Bergantini in 1529, though this lacks the mark.

Only four of the maiolica pieces discussed here are dependent on engravings alone, and three of these posit a direct relationship between a maiolica painter and one or more of Dürer's engravings.

The earliest of these, in that it dates to around 1505–15, is a dish in Berlin with a fancifully classical scene of three putti in a landscape (Pl. 15). The print borrowings have been carefully analysed by Schmidt, and later by Hausmann: their observations are repeated here.<sup>36</sup> The putti are copied exactly in reverse from Dürer's engraving of *Three Genii* of c. 1500 (Meder 99; Pl. 16). These make classical supporters for a blank shield and a helmet. However the uppermost putto is not holding a helmet as in the engraving, making his gesture meaningless. The hunter in the background right and the trees beyond are also distantly derived from Dürer's engraving, the *Small Courier* of c. 1496 (Meder 79) but seen through the lens of an engraving by Nicoletto da Modena<sup>37</sup> in which Dürer's rider has been turned into a hunter. Nicoletto's engraving provided the rock formation and landscape used by the maiolica painter. With its bold band of trophy ornament, the dish is a delightful caprice in the antique manner, set within an arcadian landscape which translates an essentially literary classical concept into pictorial form.

A more straightforward borrowing from a single Dürer engraving of c. 1502 is found on a dish painted in Faenza around 1510 (Pl. 17).<sup>38</sup> The engraving shows a standard-bearer in a landscape, and bears Dürer's monogram (Meder 92; Pl. 18). The youth stands in a rigorously classical and heroic pose like that of an ancient sculpture of a male nude. He bears a banner with the Cross of St Andrew, emblematic of the Order of the Golden Fleece. On the Faenza dish, the maiolica artist has softened the pose to make the figure more etiolated and graceful. He has altered many details: the face is seen in profile, rather than three-quarter view; the sword is held out from the hip rather than behind the figure; while the Cross of St Andrew has been replaced with a charming peppermint-green striped flag in which the stripes run counter to the folds of the material as it flaps. The general effect is decorative, and the small changes in the figure's dress add to the detail, such as the plumed hat (Dürer's figure is bare-headed), the slashed breeches and the fine lawn tunic worn under the doublet. Add to this the lunar landscape, the bold brushstrokes of cobalt blue which surround the figure, and the four concentric rings of decoration on the border, and the original impact of the Dürer figure is transmuted into something gentler and more ornamental. The maiolica artist has made a painterly translation of Dürer's powerful print, making a sophisticated and subtle work of his own.

Next in date is a single-sided roundel formerly from the Oppenheimer collection, probably painted in Tuscany

around 1510–25 with a composite scene of the *Holy Family* (Pl. 19).<sup>39</sup> The Virgin and Child on a turf seat are taken from a reversed copy of one of Dürer's earliest and most Italianate engravings, the *Virgin and Child with a monkey* of c. 1498 (Meder 30; Pl. 20). Out of the 15 recorded copies of this famous print, three were engraved by Italian artists, and it was probably one of these that the maiolica painter used.<sup>40</sup> It is interesting that the Italian maiolica painter rejected the Northern landscape in favour of ruined buildings of the type found in Dürer's *Life of the Virgin* series of woodcuts of c. 1503–05. The right side of the composition is copied directly from Dürer's engraved *Nativity* (Meder 2) dated 1504, while the left half with the small arch superimposed on the larger one, comes from a reversed copy of Dürer's woodcut of the *Adoration of the Magi* (Meder 199).<sup>41</sup> The figure of Joseph with his hat, picked out in a bright red by the maiolica painter, is taken from a reversed copy of an earlier woodcut by Dürer, the *Holy Family with three hares* (Meder 212). However Joseph's stick has been truncated by the Madonna's seat, making nonsense of his leaning posture. The narrow, detailed border of grotesques on a blue ground and key fret ornament is highly sophisticated and helps to date this plaque more closely.

The manner in which the different prints have been put together to create a single composition, links this roundel with a third piece, this time a plate in the British Museum, with a pagan scene in a landscape of a satyr and a woman with a baby (Pl. 21).<sup>42</sup> Probably made in Tuscany around 1510–25, this plate is put together from two Dürer engravings – as first noted by Liverani – which show Dürer at his most Italianate.<sup>43</sup> The first is *Hercules at the Crossroads*, of around 1498 (Meder 63) from which the artist has extracted the intertwined trees, placed at the centre of his composition as Dürer does in his. These trees were based on those in a drawing done in Italy while Dürer was travelling there on his first visit in 1494. The print shows how closely Dürer looked at the work of Italian printmakers or designers such as Mantegna and Antonio Pollaiuolo; also the pervasiveness of the very classical Italianate concept of the satyr, seen in the print at bottom left.<sup>44</sup> The maiolica painter refers back to Dürer's satyr in his composition. The reclining nude woman on the dish, who looks as if she may just have given birth and is now cradling the sleeping baby in her lap, is based on another Dürer engraving, the *Satyr family*, dated 1505 (Meder 65; Pl. 22). This too shows Dürer responding to a contemporary Italian concept of a classical, pagan landscape inhabited by half-human creatures – the satyrs of the sculptor Riccio,<sup>45</sup> or the painter Piero di Cosimo for instance.<sup>46</sup> It is no wonder that Vasari praised this print for its 'supreme mastery' ('sottilissimo magisterio').<sup>47</sup> As Liverani thought, the maiolica painter has copied Dürer's engraving at first remove via a copy by Giovanni Antonio da Brescia, which reverses the figures.<sup>48</sup> The riverine landscape and acidic colours are however the painter's own, making this dish an impressive, evocative work of art. As Liverani eloquently put it, describing this very dish:

the maiolica painter... does not suppress his personality in front of the model. And it is not, mark you, the adaptation of some detail, nor enrichment with colour that give him his right to individual consideration, but rather the expression of a linear

and chromatic sensibility attuned to the play of light with [tin-] glaze, that distinguish him as much from the mural or easel painter as from the engraver.<sup>49</sup>

Perhaps the most famous of all Dürer compositions on maiolica is a brilliantly lusted dish in New York with the *Prodigal Son*, after Dürer's famous engraving of c. 1496 (Pl. 23).<sup>50</sup> This is one of four maiolica adaptations of Dürer's engraving, of which one was destroyed in Berlin in the Second World War.<sup>51</sup> This dish, the finest of the surviving pieces, is dated on the reverse 1525, and inscribed with the initials of the workshop master, Maestro Giorgio of Gubbio.<sup>52</sup> It has been studied in some detail, particularly as far as print sources are concerned, by George Szabò in an article of 1970. As he points out, the scene on the front is taken from one of the Italian copies after Dürer, probably the one by Giovanni Antonio da Brescia which reverses the composition.<sup>53</sup> The maiolica painter has increased the number of houses in the background and simplified the river on the right. What marks out the piece however is the skilful use of lustre, applied as a final finish to the already painted and fired ware, to lighten the composition and point the narrative. The outstanding red lustre used here is the most difficult to achieve successfully and indicates a high-status product which has been expertly fired as well as painted.<sup>54</sup> The lustre is skilfully managed so as to highlight just those features which Giorgio Vasari so much admired.<sup>55</sup> In his account of the print, Vasari describes all the everyday Germanic details to be seen in this depiction of the intense moment of conscience, at which the prodigal son suddenly repents and kneels in prayer.<sup>56</sup> The painter has, in the words of George Szabò, 'transplanted the engraving into maiolica and transformed the composition into its special idiom with perfection'.<sup>57</sup>

We have moved in this brief discussion from excerpts and adaptations of Dürer woodcut sources to assured composites or, in the Gubbio dish, an exact translation of Dürer engravings. Each of them demonstrates in different ways how a black and white print, with all its subtleties of line and shading, is understood when translated into a colourful medium. The result could be merely distracting, or could represent a metamorphosis into an independent work of art.

All of them share the same meticulous, even miniaturistic, approach. This raises the question as to how the designs were transferred.<sup>58</sup> The upturned edges of many of the dishes would make pouncing all but impossible, and it is more likely that outlines were drawn carefully in cobalt blue, then filled in. The *Small Passion* must have been a useful size for adapting to maiolica dishes. The fact that many of these pieces were mediated via Italian copies raises interesting questions about the pattern of diffusion of Dürer prints in relation to those of Italian copyists and their relative prices. These questions remain unanswered. It has been suggested by John Mallet that patrons might have lent Dürer prints to be copied in maiolica workshops as part of the commission; these might then have been copied as workshop drawings which could be used again.<sup>59</sup> There is much to commend this hypothesis, particularly when considering the painter Francesco Xanto Avelli who, as Mallet has also pointed out, excerpted figures from relatively

few prints but used these figures all the time in his work.<sup>60</sup> There is little doubt that a collector such as Sabba da Castiglione, who is known to have collected prints, had good links with local artists and artisans (though only commissioning maiolica once) in Bologna, Faenza and Forlì, and there must have been other patrons like him.<sup>61</sup> But there are factors which work against this hypothesis. The idea of a patron lending a specific print or series would mean that many of the pieces we have seen were direct commissions: since none of them bear arms, this would seem unlikely. It would appear instead that the pieces were produced speculatively. One must also remember that there were a large number of 'original' prints and pirated copies in circulation, and there must have been workshop and other drawings available too. We need to know much more about the relative prices and availability of Dürer prints and their Italian copies before we can come to any conclusions. We would also need to know more about maiolica workshop practice than we currently do. Meanwhile I hope that this paper will encourage systematic work on these early examples of *istoriato* maiolica as self-conscious examples of a modern art, one which harnessed the new technologies of printing and printmaking.

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### Notes

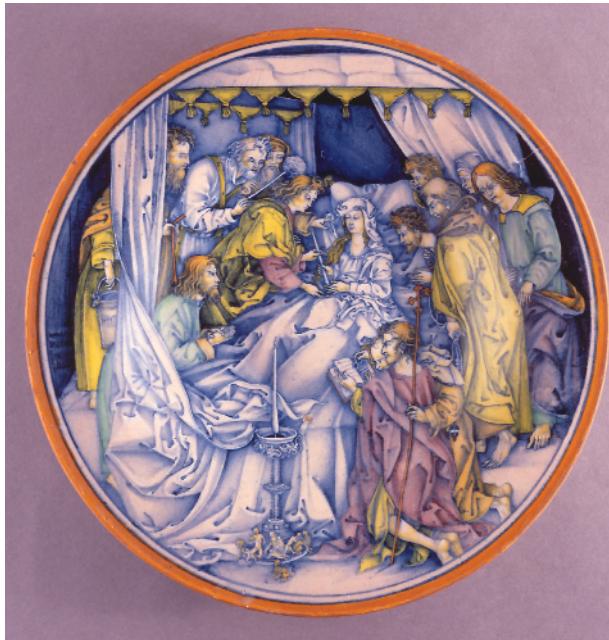
- 1 G. Vasari, *Le opere di Giorgio Vasari*, 9 vols., ed. G. Milanesi, Florence, 1906, vol. 5, 403-6. The translation given here was specially made for this paper by Giulia Bartrum and myself.
- 2 For Dürer's influence, particularly on painters in Italy, see R. Schöch, "Un gran numero di carte stampate dell'Alemagna" zur italienischen Dürerrezeption des 16. Jahrhunderts", in Maué, H., Eser, T., Hauschke, S., and Stolzenburger, J., *Quasi Centrum Europae, Europa kauft in Nürnberg 1400-1800*, exh. cat. Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, 432-49.
- 3 S. da Castiglione, *Ricordi, ovvero Amaestramenti*, Milan, 1559, 185-6, my translation; see also J.V.G. Mallet, 'Alcune maioliche faentine in raccolte inglesi', *Faenza*, LX, fasc. 1-3, 3-15, 1974, 12.
- 4 For Sabba, see *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 1976, 100-5. His artistic interests are revealed by his comments on art and collecting in his book, *I Ricordi*, first published in Venice 1546, Milan edition 1559, *Ricordo 109*, 'Circa gli ornamenti della casa', in which he lists pieces in his own collection. These are described further in his two wills, for which see S. Cortesi, ed., *IDue Testamenti di Fra Sabba da Castiglione*, Faenza, 2000. For studies of his collecting and art criticism, see E. Bonaffé, 'Sabba da Castiglione: notes sur la curiosité italienne', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, XXX, 1884, 19-154; D. Thornton, *The Scholar in His Study*:

- ownership and Experience in Renaissance Italy*, New Haven and London, 1997, 106–14; D. Thornton, ‘Le mie cose: Fra Sabba da Castiglione e i suoi oggetti,’ *Sabba da Castiglione 1480–1554, Dalle corti rinascimentali alla Commenda di Faenza*, atti del convegno, [Faenza 2000] Florence, forthcoming 2004, 307–22.
- 5 D. Landau and P. Parshall, *The Renaissance Print 1470–1550*, New Haven and London, 1994, 289–92; M. Bury, ‘The taste for prints in Italy’, *Print Quarterly*, 2, 1985, 12–26.
  - 6 Cortesi 2000, *op. cit.*, 34–7 and 178–81 for sections from the two wills describing the albums, and Thornton 2004, *op. cit.*, 317.
  - 7 G. Rebbeckini, *Private Collectors in Mantua*, Rome, 2002, 221, citing C.M. Brown, and A.M. Lorenzoni 1986, ‘Inventario dei beni dil quondam Nicolò do Possavini già aurefice in Mantua, 26 novembre 1541’, *Quaderni di Palazzo Té*, 5, 1986, 75–80.
  - 8 G. Bartrum, *Albrecht Dürer and his Legacy*, exh. cat. the British Museum, London, 2002, 255, cat. 210. I would like to thank Jeremy Warren for alerting me to a recent article discussing the influence of Dürer on early sixteenth-century Lombard sculpture, see S. Bianchi, ‘Appunti relative ad alcune fonti a stampa delle principali realizzazioni nell’arte della scultura lignea in Lombardia tra Quattro e Cinquecento’, *Raccolta di studi e di notizie*, XXVII, 2003, 123–74.
  - 9 For pieces eliminated from my discussion see for example a plaque attributed to Cafaggiolo, c. 1520 showing the Holy family after Dürer’s woodcut of 1511 in A. Ladis, *Italian Renaissance Maiolica from Southern Collections*, Georgia Museum of Art, 1989, 50–1 cat. 6. This was accepted as genuine in B. Rackham, *Islamic Pottery and Italian Maiolica*, London, 1959, no. 326, but now requires further investigation: I have not seen it myself. There is also a dish in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (51.2470) with the *Visitation* after Dürer’s woodcut scene in the *Life of the Virgin* series. This has been attributed to Faenza and is apparently dated 1523, for which see R. Bruce Livie, *Auch Kleine Dinge: Dürer and the Decorative Tradition*, exh. cat. Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University, Harvard, 1971, cat. 18. Also in Boston is a plaque with the *Lamentation* after the *Large Passion* woodcut, attributed to Faenza c. 1515 (see Bruce-Livie, cat. 21, not illustrated). I have not seen either of these pieces in Boston. I am grateful to Timothy Wilson for these references. I am also grateful to John Mallet for bringing two further Dürer-inspired pieces to my notice. First, a fragment in the Victoria and Albert Museum, which is finely-painted with *Samson and the Lion* after Dürer’s woodcut (Meder 107) and is attributed to the painter known from his initials as ‘FR’, Faenza c. 1520–25; see B. Rackham, *Victoria and Albert Museum, Catalogue of Italian Maiolica*, London, 1940, 261, cat. 794. Second, a dish from the Fountaine collections, signed by ‘FR’, purportedly after one of Dürer’s prints of *St Jerome*, for which see B. Rackham, and G. Ballardini, ‘Il pittore di maiolica FR’, *Bollettino d’arte*, 26, 1933, 403; and C.D.E. Fortnum, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Maiolica in the South Kensington Museum*, London, 1873, 505 and 535. There is also a dish in Nuremberg, attributed to Venice around 1550–60, with the *Holy Family* after Dürer’s woodcut of 1511 (Meder 215). The figure group is faithfully copied, with minor decorative details added, but placed in a different landscape in which only the central two trees behind the figures are retained. The piece is discussed in detail in S. Glaser, *Majolika, Die Italienischen Fayencen im Germanischen Nationalmuseum Nürnberg*, Nuremberg 2000, 240–1, cat. 206.
  - 10 There is an important bowl in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, attributed to Faenza and dated 1519, with a scene of the *Entombment* in the bowl after Dürer’s *Small Passion* (Meder 153). The narrative scene is surrounded with a grotesque border (Rackham, 1940, *op. cit.*, cat. 276; G. Ballardini, *Corpus della maiolica italiana I. Le maioliche datate fino al 1530*, Rome, 1933, I: 83 (86), 257; J.V.G. Mallet, ‘Alcune maioliche faentine in raccolte inglesi’, *Faenza*, 1974, fasc. 3–15, 9, pl. VIII).
  - 11 R. Schmidt, ‘Italienische Majoliken, ihre deutschen Vorbilder und deutschen Besteller’, *Deutschland-Italien, Beiträge zu den Kulturbeziehungen zwischen Norden und Süden, Festschrift für Wilhelm Waetzoldt zu seinem 60 Geburtstage 21 Februar 1940*, Berlin, 1941, 162–76; R. Schmidt, ‘Italienische Majoliken, ihre deutschen Vorbilder und deutschen Besteller’, *Freunde der Schweizer Keramik*, 1950, Mitteilungsblatt, 16, 1–10.
  - 12 See note 10 above.
  - 13 J. Rasmussen, *The Robert Lehman Collection 10. Italian Majolica*, New York, 1989, 196–8, cat. 119.
  - 14 G. Szabò, ‘Dürer and Italian Majolica I, Four plates with the *Prodigal Son amid the swine*’, *American Ceramic Circle Bulletin*, 1970–71, 21, pl. II.
  - 15 C. Ravanello Guidotti, *Ceramiche occidentali del Museo Civico Medievale di Bologna*, Bologna, 1985, 145–6, cat. 107; Szabò, *op. cit.*, 23.
  - 16 For a triptych and a plaque after Dürer prints, see Bartrum 2002, *op. cit.*, 256 cat. 211, 262 cat. 216, and pp. 240–1, and references in note 12 to sets of enamelled plaques after Dürer’s *Small Passion*. For these sets see also S. Caroselli, *The Painted Enamels of Limoges*, Los Angeles, 1993, 84–91, cats. 5–8.
  - 17 T. Wilson, *Ceramic Art of the Italian Renaissance*, exh. cat. the British Museum, London 1987, 10–12; L. Syson, and D. Thornton, *Objects of Virtue, Art in Renaissance Italy*, London, 2001, 200–28.
  - 18 Vasari, *op. cit.*, VI, 581; Syson and Thornton, *op. cit.*, 214.
  - 19 Syson and Thornton, *op. cit.*, 200–1.
  - 20 Mallet, *op. cit.*, 19.
  - 21 For Lucas van Leyden see Mallet, *op. cit.*, fasc. 9, pls IX–X, fasc. 10, pl. XI; M. Brody, ‘Italian Renaissance pottery at Stoke-on-Trent’, *Apollo*, January 2001, 10–11, fig. 4.
  - 22 J. Henderson, *Works of Art in Pottery, Glass, and Metal in the Collection of John Henderson*, London [privately printed], 1868, pl. VIII; C.D.E. Fortnum, *Maiolica, A Historical Treatise*, Oxford, 1896, 256–7; O. von Falke, *Majolika*, Berlin, 1907, 108; M. Sauerlandt, ‘Ceramiche italiane nei musei tedeschi’, *Faenza* 17, 1929, 78–9, pl. VII; B. Rackham, ‘Italian maiolica’, *Faenza*, 18, 1930, 146, pl. XXXIa.; Rackham 1940, *op. cit.* vol. 1, 86; G. Liverani, *La maiolica italiana sino alla comparsa della porcellana europea*, Milan, 1958, 26, fig. XVIII; H-P. Fourest, *La Céramique Européenne*, Paris, 1983, pl. 39; Wilson 1987, *op. cit.* 40–1, cat. 40.
  - 23 For this engraving and its contemporary standing, see Bartrum 1995, 21 cat. 3; Hollstein 16.
  - 24 Two reversed engraved copies of Schongauer’s *Dormition of the Virgin* are recorded: by the Monogrammist ie (Hollstein 16 copy b) and by Israhel van Meckenem (Hollstein 16, copy e).
  - 25 For Marcantonio’s *Small Passion* after Dürer see Bartsch 584–620; for his *Life of the Virgin* after Dürer see Bartsch 621–38.
  - 26 J.C. Robinson, *Majolica wares in Catalogue of the Special Exhibition of Works of Art... on loan at the South Kensington Museum*, London, 1862, no. 1568; C.D.E. Fortnum, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Maiolica in the South Kensington Museum*, London, 1873, 490; B. Rackham, ‘The Master of the Resurrection Panel’, *Anzeiger des Landesmuseums in Troppau*, II, Augsburg 1930, 70–84; Rackham 1940, *op. cit.*, 86; Liverani, 1958, *op. cit.*, 26; Mallet *op. cit.*, 11; Ravanello Guidotti, *op. cit.*, 72, Wilson 1987, *op. cit.*, 41, cat. 41; Bartrum, 2002, *op. cit.*, 254, cat. 208.
  - 27 Syson and Thornton, *op. cit.*, 208 for a contemporary comment on the admirable lightness and delicacy of the finest maiolica in the late 15th century.
  - 28 Syson and Thornton, *op. cit.*, 80 and 99.
  - 29 H. Delange, *Histoire des peintures sur majoliques*, Paris, 1853, 103, also Mallet, *op. cit.*, 10, pl. XII.
  - 30 Wilson 1987, *op. cit.*, 115, cat. 183; Bartrum 2002, *op. cit.*, 254–5, cat. 209.
  - 31 J. Poole, *Italian Maiolica and Incised Slipware in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge*, Cambridge, 1995, 253–5, cat. 332.
  - 32 Ravanello Guidotti, *op. cit.*, 71–2, cat. 39 gives a bibliography for the piece.
  - 33 T. Hausmann, *Majolika, Spanische und Italienische Keramik vom 14. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*, Berlin, 1972, 160–5, cat. 121, with full bibliography. The piece was analysed by Schmidt 1941, *op. cit.*, 67, and Schmidt 1950, *op. cit.*, 9.
  - 34 Hausmann *op. cit.*, 161–2.
  - 35 Rackham 1940, *op. cit.*, 94, cat. 280A; Mallet 1974, *op. cit.*, 11, pl. XIII; Bartrum 2002, *op. cit.*, 248, cat. 202.
  - 36 Schmidt 1941, *op. cit.*, 166; Hausmann *op. cit.*, 159–60, cat. 120; R. Schmidt, ‘Zur Geschichte der faetiner Majolika’, *Der Cicerone*, IV, 1912, 518; Sauerlandt 1929, *op. cit.*, 79; O. von Falke, ‘Der Majolikamaler TB von Faenza’, *Pantheon*, 1934, 22, pl. 6.
  - 37 A.M. Hind, *Early Italian Engraving*, London, 1948, vol. V, 119, no. 26.
  - 38 G. Liverani, ‘Un frammento di maiolica faentina del primo cinquecento’, *Faenza*, 36, 1950, 104–7, pl. XXXb. Sold at auction in Paris, Succession du Baron Fould Springer, 11 March 2003, cat. 410. The attribution of this superb dish to Faenza is beyond

doubt, though it was sold in Paris attributed to Cafaggiolo. It is clearly related to a fine dish in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, with Perseus and Andromeda, which has a very similar border and identical undecorated reverse, in which the pinkish clay body is covered with only a thin layer of tin-glaze. These two reverses are atypical of Faenza. The centres of the two dishes may however be by two different hands. Rackham, in cataloguing the V&A example, attributed it to 'the Master CI' on the basis of a fragment in St Petersburg bearing these initials, and put it in relation with several other pieces, though not this one, (Rackham 1940, *op. cit.*, 81). This attribution was taken up by Liverani, who added this piece to the group identified by Rackham. While certain of the relationship between the V&A and this piece as being made in the same Faentine workshop at the same period, I am not convinced by the attribution to the Master CI. I will be exploring these issues further in the forthcoming catalogue of the maiolica collections of the British Museum, which I am currently preparing with Timothy Wilson.

- 39 Henry Oppenheimer sale, Christie's, London 15-17 July 1936, lot 45.  
 40 See W.L. Strauss, *The Illustrated Bartsch*, 10 (Commentary), New York, 1981, 99ff.  
 41 For Marcantonio's engraved copies of *Holy Family in Egypt* and *Adoration of the Magi* see Bartsch 633 and Bartsch 630.  
 42 Rackham 1940, *op. cit.*, 110; Fourest 1983, *op. cit.*, pl. 38; Wilson 1987, *op. cit.*, 87 cat. 131; S. Alinari, 'The Vulcan Painter and the Fall of Phaeton', in T. Wilson (ed.), *Italian Renaissance Pottery*, London, 1991, 81.  
 43 G. Liverani, 'Un'incisione di Alberto Dürer e due maioliche

- faentine', *Faenza*, 29, 1941, 31 pl. XV.  
 44 Bartrum 2002, *op. cit.*, 245-6, cat. 197-9.  
 45 J. Martineau and C. Hope, *The Genius of Venice 1500-1600*, exh. cat. London, Royal Academy of Arts, 377, cat. S23 for a group of satyr and satyress by Riccio in the Victoria and Albert Museum.  
 46 For example, Piero di Cosimo's *Death of Procris* in the National Gallery, London, S. Fermor, *Piero di Cosimo. Fiction, Invention and Fantasia*, London, 1993, 49-54, fig. 6.  
 47 Vasari 1906, *op. cit.*, vol. V, 400.  
 48 Liverani 1941, *op. cit.*, 31.  
 49 Liverani 1941, *op. cit.*, 32; Mallet 1974, *op. cit.*, 21, his translation.  
 50 Meder 28; Bartrum 2002, *op. cit.*, 111, cat. 42.  
 51 Schmidt 1941, *op. cit.*, 162-3; G. Szabò, 'Dürer and Italian Majolica I, Four plates with the *Prodigal Son amid the swine*', *American Ceramic Circle Bulletin*, 1970-71, 5-28.  
 52 J. Rasmussen, *Italian Majolica in the Lehman Collection, The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York, 1989, 196-8.  
 53 Hind *op. cit.* vol. V, 49, no. 37; Szabò 1970-71, *op. cit.*, 12-13.  
 54 T. Wilson, 'The beginnings of lustreware in Renaissance Italy', *The International Ceramics Fair and Seminar*, London, 1996, 39-40 for difficulties of lustre production.  
 55 Vasari 1906, *op. cit.*, vol. V, 399.  
 56 Ibid.  
 57 Szabò 1970-71, *op. cit.*, 23.  
 58 For comments on design transfer on maiolica by Xanto Avelli, see T. Wilson, 'Xanto and Ariosto', *Apollo*, May 1990, 322.  
 59 Mallet 1974, *op. cit.*, 12.  
 60 Ibid.  
 61 Thornton 2004.



**Plate 1** Maiolica dish (tin-glazed earthenware) with the *Dormition of the Virgin*, after Martin Schongauer, probably made in Faenza c. 1505-15, British Museum.



**Plate 2** Martin Schongauer *Dormition of the Virgin*, c. 1470-75, engraving, British Museum.



**Plate 3** Maiolica bowl (tin-glazed earthenware) with *Christ manhandled by soldiers*, made in Faenza c. 1510–1520, British Museum.



**Plate 4** Albrecht Dürer, *Christ before Annas* from the *Small Passion*, c. 1509–11, woodcut, British Museum.



**Plate 5** Maiolica footed dish (tin-glazed earthenware) with *Christ Washing the Disciples' Feet*, made in Faenza c. 1515–25. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



**Plate 6** Albrecht Dürer, *Christ Washing the Disciples' Feet* from the *Small Passion*, c. 1509–11, woodcut, British Museum.



**Plate 7** Maiolica dish with *Christ before Pilate*, made in Faenza, c. 1520–25, Museo Civico Medioevale, Bologna.



**Plate 8** Albrecht Dürer, *Christ before Pilate* from the *Small Passion*, c. 1509–11, woodcut, British Museum.



**Plate 9** Marcantonio Raimondi, *Christ before Pilate* after Dürer, c. 1512, engraving, British Museum.



**Plate 10** Maiolica dish with *Christ taking leave of his Mother*, made in Faenza c. 1515–1520. Kunstgewerbe Museum, Berlin.



**Plate 11** Marcantonio Raimondi, *Christ taking leave of his Mother*, after Dürer, engraving, c. 1505–06, British Museum.



**Plate 12** Maiolica footed dish with the *Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, made in Faenza c. 1515–25. The Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



**Plate 13** Marcantonio Raimondi, *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, after Dürer, c. 1505–06, engraving, British Museum.



**Plate 14** Albrecht Dürer, *The Marriage of the Virgin* from the *Life of the Virgin*, c. 1503–05, woodcut, British Museum.



**Plate 15** Maiolica dish with three putti, made in Faenza, c. 1505–15. Kunstgewerbe Museum, Berlin.



**Plate 16** Albrecht Dürer, *The Three Genii*, engraving, c. 1500, British Museum.



**Plate 17** Maiolica plate with a standard-bearer, made in Faenza c. 1510.  
Private Collection.



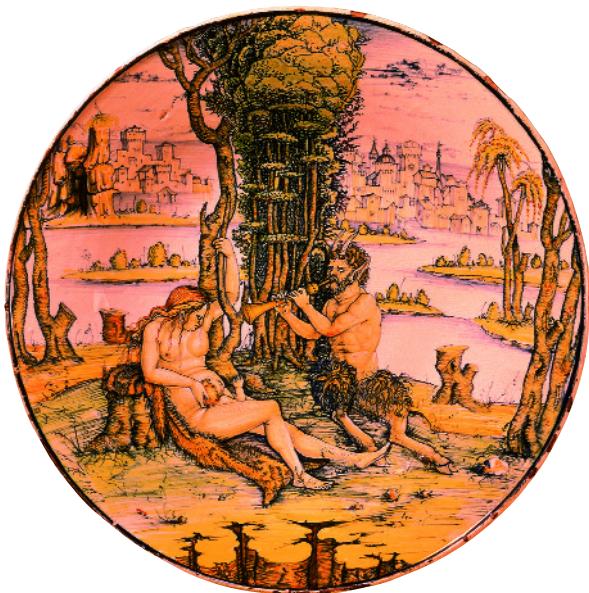
**Plate 18** Albrecht Dürer, *The Standard-Bearer*, engraving, c. 1502, British Museum.



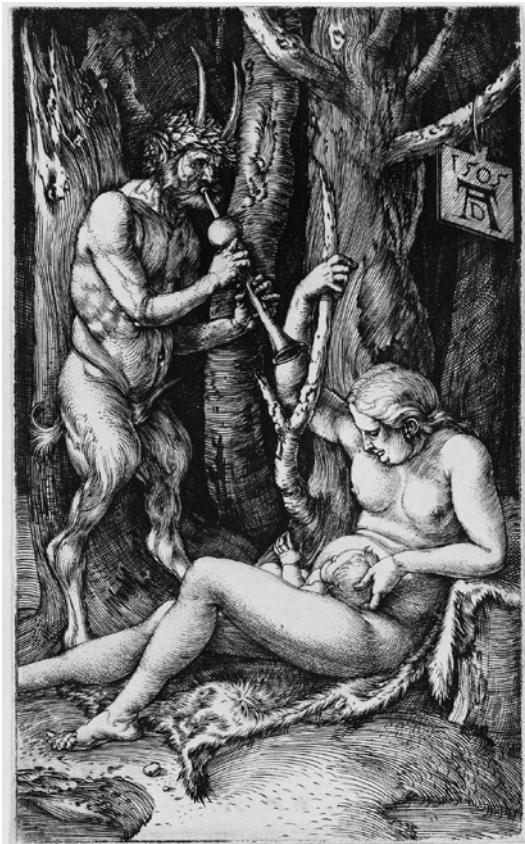
**Plate 19** Maiolica roundel, with *The Holy Family*, perhaps Tuscan,  
c. 1510–25, formerly in the Oppenheimer collection, Photo Sotheby



**Plate 20** Albrecht Dürer, *The Virgin and Child with a Monkey*, engraving,  
c. 1498, British Museum.



**Plate 21** Maiolica plate with a satyr piping to a woman and her baby in a landscape, attributed to the Vulcan Painter, Tuscany c. 1510, British Museum.



**Plate 22** Albrecht Dürer, the *Satyr Family* engraving, 1505, British Museum.



**Plate 23** Albrecht Dürer, *The Prodigal Son*, engraving, c. 1496, British Museum.