

'Il papà delle antiche maioliche'

C. D. E. Fortnum and the study of Italian maiolica

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C. D. E. Fortnum's catalogue of the Italian maiolica and related pottery in the South Kensington Museum is a milestone in the history of ceramic scholarship. He received the commission after J. C. Robinson, who had planned to write the catalogue, quarrelled with the Museum authorities. In the Fortnum Archive at the Ashmolean is a quantity of correspondence with *confrères céramiques* in Britain and Europe, which throws interesting light on the scholarly and collecting world of the time. The letters written to Fortnum between 1896 and 1899 from Federigo Argnani of Faenza show the men courteously exchanging information, though agreeing to differ on some contentious scholarly issues. Fortnum's collection, still the basis of the Ashmolean Museum's holdings, was formed for the most part between 1854 and 1862.

IN 1889 a plate was painted for C. D. E. Fortnum in the Cantagalli workshop in Florence (Figs. 1, 2). Around the border is superbly painted decoration in the Gubbio style of the 1520s; in the centre, surmounted as if by a heraldic crest by a winged cherub-head, is a volume lettered: *MAIOLICA CATALOGO SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM DI C. DRURY E.*

FORTNUM F.S.A. and on the spine *LONDRA 1873*. On the reverse is the inscription, *A C. DRURY E. FORTNUM Loro guida nell'arte Ricordo delli artisti della bottega. Fatto in bottega Cantagalli in Fiorenza 1889 da Ulderigo Grillanti pittore*, with the workshop mark of a cockerell.¹ There is flattery here, but the phrase 'their guide in the art' is an enduring



Figs. 1, 2. Lustrated maiolica plate made for Fortnum in the Cantagalli workshop, Florence, 1889. Ashmolean Museum, Fortnum Bequest, wa OA 90.

testimony, from the most renowned maiolica-revival firm in late nineteenth-century Italy, to the recipient's internationally pre-eminent stature in maiolica scholarship. The Fortnum Archive in the Ashmolean Museum includes correspondence with European researchers which testifies both to the range of his investigations and to the respect in which those he called his *confrères céramiques* held him. Despite the great advances in archival and archaeological work that have taken place since, Fortnum's 1873 catalogue of the maiolica in the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum) and his 1896 reworking, *Maiolica*, remain of value, they are the most useful general works on maiolica, in any language, written in the nineteenth century.

In a letter of 15 July 1889, Arthur Evans, Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, noted that 'in your case the study of Nature led on to the study of Art'² In his twenties, before a prudent marriage enabled him to become a gentleman-collector and connoisseur, Fortnum's consuming passion was entomology; the habits then developed of close observation and systematic classification are the foundations of his achievement as a scholar of maiolica.

His first contribution to ceramic history was a paper presented to the Society of Antiquaries of London on 16 February 1860 on *bacini*, dishes inset into the exterior walls of (sometimes datable) medieval churches in Pisa, Pavia, Bologna, Rome and elsewhere. He described his intermittently successful endeavours to get close enough to the *bacini* to make drawings of them, or on two occasions to remove 'specimens'. At San Piero a Grado, near Pisa

By borrowing a ladder from a neighbouring farm, and mounting this upon an old table, I contrived to get within reach of two which had been much broken, and succeeded, though not without difficulty from the hardness of the mortar, in detaching some small fragments. They are made of a coarse red earth, hard and heavy, and covered with a white *engobe* under the lead glaze, at once marking their Italian origin. The small church of Santa Cecilia I noticed quite accidentally, and there found matter of considerable interest. I noticed a plate which attracted my attention by its brilliant blue colour and marked oriental character. It was much broken and more than half had fallen out. On making application to the *rettore* I learnt that the church was founded in the year 1103 and consecrated in 1107. I begged permission to ascend the campanile, and detach a portion of the *graffiti* specimens, and also particularly for a bit of the turquoise. Leave was at

once most courteously granted, and having procured a ladder I found that the greater part of the plate was loose, and at once secured my prize.³

The reminiscence of the entomologist climbing trees in search of larvae is irresistible.

The South Kensington Museum catalogue

What established Fortnum as an international authority was the commission to write the *Descriptive Catalogue of the Maiolica . . . in the South Kensington Museum*, which was published in 1873. This monumental work had a painful genesis. In the preface, he wrote:

The writer has undertaken this work with some reluctance, from a feeling it might have been in better hands. Mr J C Robinson had announced his intention of publishing a work on Maiolica, a subject to which he had paid great attention, and upon which he had thrown so much light. For that work he had collected considerable material, and none can regret more than he who writes these lines, that Mr Robinson was prevented by circumstances from undertaking the task, the more so as the collection which it would have described was mainly formed under his able guidance, and could have been better illustrated from his wide research and ready pen.

John Charles Robinson (1824–1913) was one of the greatest connoisseurs of Italian Renaissance art, of various types, of the nineteenth century.⁴ In 1853 he had been appointed curator of the new Museum of Ornamental Art at Marlborough House, which was, under the forceful direction of Henry Cole, developing rapidly and was to move to South Kensington in 1857. Earlier, Robinson had taught at the School of Design in Hanley, in the Staffordshire Potteries, and in the 1850s, pottery, especially 'Majolica', was at the forefront of his interests. His first publication on the subject was in the 1856 catalogue of the Soulages collection; this varied collection was successfully purchased for South Kensington, thanks to numerous guarantors, including 'C Drury E. Fortnum, Stanmore Hill, Middlesex', who pledged £200.⁵ It included 167 items of 'Majolica ware' and in the introduction Robinson asserted the importance of the subject:

More commonly known in this country as 'Raffaello ware' or 'Faenza ware', it has always had a certain traditional prestige, even whilst the finest specimens were to be met with for shillings in every curiosity-shop in Italy. It is only during the present century, and indeed within the last few years, that anything like a real or critical knowledge of

this class of work of art has become at all general. It is now perceived to be one of the most important categories of industrial or decorative art which the world has yet seen quite as excellent in its degree as the great works of painting and sculpture of the same period. The taste for Majolica, which is now becoming a passion with amateurs, is thus founded on rational grounds, and it is evident that a development of industrial art of this acknowledged importance is well worthy to be represented in our national collections.

He added in a note

The author has been for a considerable time engaged in collecting materials for a work on the Majolica, and takes this opportunity of publicly announcing his design, in hopes that it may be the means of procuring him additional materials, especially as the undertaking is one involving a very considerable amount of labour and observation, and must be prosecuted *con amore*, without hope or prospect of any material recompense.

An appendix on the various members of the Fontana family of Urbino is described as 'an extract from the MS. of his work on the Majolica, now in progress'. Two years later, Robinson gave a more connected account in the lavish album celebrating the Art Treasures Exhibition at Manchester in 1857.⁶ In 1862, the catalogue entries on the astonishing group of masterpieces from English private collections assembled by Robinson at South Kensington for loan to the 'Special Exhibition of Works of Art' demonstrated that his knowledge of maiolica had few equals anywhere.⁷

A more immediate task, however, was a catalogue of the Museum's Italian sculpture. Although Robinson was busy preparing the enormous Loan Exhibition, which opened in June, the sculpture catalogue, which had been commissioned in August 1861, was printed by 15 May 1862, on that day Robinson sent a copy to W. E. Gladstone, Chancellor of the Exchequer, a porcelain collector and personal acquaintance. 'I am half ashamed' he wrote, 'at again troubling you with one of my imperfect performances and fear you will conclude I am possessed with an inconvenient catalogue making mania – I have, however, worked at this with some persistence during the nights of many not inactive days, and as you were in a great measure the founder of the collection it describes, it is my duty to offer you the first copy for your acceptance. I have now well in hand the Majolica series, which will make a much more extensive work'.⁸

On 1 August the Board of the Department of Science and Art instructed him to proceed: 'Mr Robinson to prepare descriptive illustrated catalogue of the Majolica ware, in the same manner as the Italian Sculpture Catalogue'.⁹

In the months following, however, the long-standing tensions between Robinson and Henry Cole came to a new and acrimonious head, in March 1863, Robinson's curatorship was abolished and he was effectively demoted to 'Second Art Referee'. In May 1863, nonetheless, Robinson reported on his plans

I have to report in reference to special Catalogues of the Art Museum, that I have prepared much preliminary matter for the Catalogue of the Italian Majolica wares, which I was directed to undertake by a Board Minute of last year, and I now propose to continue this work, having suspended it during the pressure of the Loan Exhibition. It is my desire to preface the descriptive Catalogue with an introductory chapter on the history of this variety of Art Pottery, and as Appendices to give translations of essential portions of certain rare Italian pamphlets on the subject, but in particular to translate and carefully annotate the important technical treatise on the Majolica manufactures by Piccol-Passo, written in 1548, and of which the original manuscript was obtained by me at Castel Durante four years ago, and is now in the Museum. The last named work is important both in a practical and historical point of view, containing in particular technical receipts, and trade secrets of great interest to modern manufactures – I should propose to print the original Italian text, and the English translation in parallel columns in small type.¹⁰

The unique illustrated manuscript of the sixteenth-century treatise on maiolica manufacture by Cipriano Piccolpasso had indeed been one of Robinson's most remarkable acquisitions. But this was an expensive-sounding proposal and the report was annotated by Cole that 'Before this is submitted to the Board it would be desirable to have some Estimate of the Extent (No. of Pages and Cost), and proposed mode of publication'. Robinson responded that it might consist of about 250 pages of text and 120 pages of catalogue descriptions, and recommended that 'the work be printed and published by Messrs Chapman and Hall, as in the case of my Italian Sculpture Catalogue'.¹¹

These papers were considered at a Board Meeting on 22 July 1863. Present were Cole, Richard Redgrave, Robert Lowe MP and the Assistant Secretary of the Department of Science and Art, Norman MacLeod. Robinson was not a member of the Board, nor invited to attend. Deletions in the

minutes¹² suggest that the discussion was hostile to him.

Read Mr Robinson's memorandum of 8 May, and his letter of 29th May on the proposed publication of a catalogue of Majolica similar to that on Italian Sculpture and the insertion in such catalogue of the text, with a translation, of the Piccolpassi MS. Also Mr Redgrave's memorandum, pointing out that this MS was published in Rome in 1857 with facsimiles of the drawings, and also published in French, with copies of all the plates in 1861, both of which published works are in the Art Library. My Lords consider it quite unnecessary that the Public shd be put to the expense of any further publication of this MS ~~which appears to have been purchased by Mr Robinson for the sum not of 2000 francs, as supposed by him, but of 2000 francs more, about £46 13 4, out of an imprest made to him for his Italian tour in 1860~~

They then read a report from Chapman and Hall saying only 422 copies had been sold of 2000 printed of the Italian Sculpture catalogue.

~~With such facts before them, shewing the loss entailed on a private publisher, the cost upon the public, and the very modest amount of public interest in the work although sold at a very insufficient price. My Lords desire that Mr Robinson will reconsider the whole subject~~

My Lords also remark that in future the Inventory of art objects will be an authentic and sufficient register of all of them and render a ~~detailed~~ Catalogue of every object unnecessary. At the same time My Lords consider that an illustrated Guide or Handbook to various divisions of the Art Museum would be useful. This guide should notice only the most remarkable objects and may properly contain information of an historical, critical and useful kind put in a brief way. Their Lordships therefore direct that Mr Robinson should undertake a Guide not merely to the Majolica but to the whole division of pottery in the Museum and when the MS. has been submitted to them they will consider under what arrangements it should be published.

This change in publishing policy defined a book very different from the specialized one Robinson had planned. Robinson was an irascible man, already with a strong sense of grievance. He did not reply, but seemingly at this point abandoned work on the catalogue. He never again published any substantial research on maiolica.¹³

In February 1865, the Board chased up the project: 'Request Mr Robinson to state how soon he may be able to go to press with the Catalogue [*inserted* "or Guide"] of the Majolica'.¹⁴ It received no response.

On 16 October 1867, they tried again: 'Mr Robinson to send in at once report on present condition of

catalogue, stating when he can deliver MS'.¹⁵ Robinson, exasperated beyond endurance by his lack of status and autonomy, wrote directly to the Duke of Marlborough, Lord President of the Council, on 5 November 1867:

By a communication dated 17th October, enclosing a copy of a Board minute, I am directed to furnish immediately a report of the exact state in which my catalogue of the Majolica Ware in the South Kensington Museum is at the present time. I infer from it that Your Grace has not been made aware, that the proposed Catalogue of Majolica was superseded by a Board minute issued in 1863 directing the discontinuance of the Majolica Catalogue and suggesting the preparation of another work instead. This minute and the correspondence accompanying it have therefore I presume been overlooked, and not laid before your Lordship. In regard to the minute of 16 February 1865, I beg to say, that I was not until now aware of its existence, but should there be any such minute directing me to proceed with a 'Catalogue of Majolica', if your Grace will have the goodness to direct a copy of it to be furnished to me, I will give it my instant attention, in the meantime I am entirely in doubt as to the present intentions of the Committee of the Privy Council on Education in regard to this Majolica Catalogue, and as it has been so long suspended I cannot of course state when the manuscript can be delivered.

The reply was from MacLeod:

You are mistaken in supposing that the Board minute of the 22nd of July 1863 directed the discontinuance of the Majolica Catalogue, authorized by the Minute of the 30th July 1862. It did not direct that the work be discontinued, but that it should be extended so as to embrace the whole Division of Pottery in the Museum. The original minute therefore is still in force.

This struck Robinson as bureaucratic double-talk, and he replied on 23 November:

Your communication does not remove the uncertainty under which I labour. I beg to remind you that the first minute (7 July 1862) authorizes me to prepare a Catalogue of the particular section of Majolica ware, while the second minute (July 1863, headed 'Guide to Pottery instead of the proposed Catalogue of Majolica') directs the preparation of an entirely different work. These minutes, in fact, authorize essentially different and incompatible undertakings.

One sympathizes with Robinson's attempts to resist the proposal to replace a detailed work of scholarship, on which he had already spent much time, with a popular guide to a much wider subject. But the issue was about to be swamped in a greater row. Robinson had been writing insubordinate letters

to the Duke of Marlborough complaining about Cole, but Cole's position was impregnable. On 2 January 1868, Robinson wrote to the Duke: 'To my utter astonishment, I have received a communication from Mr MacLeod . . . dated 30th December 1867, to the effect that my office as Permanent Art Referee of the South Kensington Museum is abolished . . .'¹⁶ In effect Robinson's connection with the South Kensington Museum was terminated and henceforth the Museum systematically requested reports from external Art Referees, such as Matthew Digby Wyatt, Richard Westmacott, John Everett Millais and C. D. E. Fortnum. As a purchasing system it was no replacement for the opportunistic brilliance of Robinson; and Fortnum and others had frequent occasion to be annoyed with the lack of curatorial expertise and clear decision-making within the Museum.¹⁷

The issue of the catalogue remained. MacLeod's letter dismissing Robinson had noted baldly: 'My Lords instruct me to take this opportunity of saying that they will be glad to hear that you have completed and have in type before the 31st March the Catalogue of the Majolica which you have had so long in preparation.' Robinson did not deign to respond.

Some time later, approaches were made to Fortnum. On 3 March 1869 he wrote to Robinson:

I heard some days since that you had again been asked by the authorities of S. K. M. whether you would complete the Catalogue of Majolica. Will you be so good as to let me know with as little delay as possible whether such is the case and if you have declined doing so. My reason for asking is that I have received another communication from them on the subject, to which I would rather not reply until I hear whether you have declined to undertake the matter.¹⁸

The versatile Robinson was in Oxford, working on a catalogue of the Raphael and Michelangelo drawings in the University Galleries; he replied promptly and unequivocally:

I have had no official communication from the Authorities of the SK Museum. Pray do not in any way consider me in your reply to them. My opinion is that catalogues of any kind would be entirely useless and superfluous in the state of disgraceful confusion, which reigns at present in that institution. The first thing to do would be to weed out again the rubbish, which has been foisted on by Cole, and to try to effect again at least some kind of rudimentary classification in fact to evoke at least the rudiments of order from chaos – until that is done the

preparation of catalogues of any kind would simply be a waste of public money.¹⁹

Fortnum eventually concluded he could entertain the invitation. A meeting of the Board of Science and Art held on 16 April was minuted as follows:

Majolica Catalogue including Hispano Moresque Ware

This Catalogue which has been in contemplation for some years past, is to be proceeded with. The Museum possesses above 1000 specimens and the materials for making the Catalogue have been got together.

Mr Fortnum, having a collection himself, and a large acknowledged experience in Majolica, is to be requested to edit the Catalogue.

The following rules are to be considered as a guide in Editing the Catalogue

A A short history is to be given of each special Manufactory, stating if it is still in existence and the Catalogue arranged according to Manufactories

B Specimens in the Museum are to be described

- a with corrections of the Inventory
- b with notes, in smaller type, on each piece if necessary
- c The marks of many of the pieces are already engraved or if important are to be specially Engraved for insertion

C The notices of any very remarkable pieces, in other collections, with marks or not, to be printed in smaller type

D The present woodcuts to be used

E A selection of subjects to be made for Photography

F Eight subjects to be selected for Chromolithography

If the Catalogue, with Introduction, exceeds 400 pages of 450 words, Mr Fortnum to be paid £200. If under 400 pages a reduction accordingly.²⁰

If Robinson was not to write the catalogue, Fortnum was the obvious alternative. He was recognized as a serious and scholarly collector and had lent maiolica to the 1862 'Special Exhibition'. He was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and had presented papers on pottery to the Society. He was known to Cole and Redgrave, as well as to Robinson, and was an adviser on purchases to the Museum. He had travelled in Italy and spoke some Italian. Finally, his own collections were desirable for South Kensington and it may have seemed tactful to try and re-establish good relations between the Museum and a potential benefactor, who had been offended by the double rejection, in 1865 and again in 1868, of the terracotta roundel he believed to be by Rossellino.²¹

Thereupon, Fortnum set about the task enthusiastically. On 27 November 1869, he wrote from Stanmore to his old acquaintance Luigi Frati, Librarian of the City of Bologna:

Il y a déjà plusieurs années que je n'avais pas le plaisir de vous voir – même je crois que le dernier fois était en 1860 – accompagné de Mons Robinson. Mons Robinson avait pris l'idée de composer un grand oeuvre sur les majoliques, et je lui ai donné mes notes de marques &c &c, mais malheureusement quoique il a recueilli une foule de notes, de marques, &c &c, il a laissé aller sans commencer le catalogue des Faïences Italiens de la collection du South Kensington M. Après ça sont venues quelques desagréments entre le Directeur du Musée, et M. Robinson qui dans ce temps la a été 'curator' – et par conséquent le catalogue raisonné n'a jamais été fait. Mons Robinson n'est plus employé au Musée, et a refusé d'écrire le catalogue. Or, après avoir attendu quelques années, le Directeur du Musée m'a fait l'honneur de me prier d'entreprendre cet ouvrage. Comme amateur, qui s'est amusé déjà longtemps en étudiant les Majoliques, il m'a croyé capable de faire cet oeuvre que j'ai déjà commencé. Je voudrais faire ce que M. Robinson avait en idée, d'ajouter un 'appendix' avec les monogrammes en facsimile qui se trouvent sur les plats &c dans les autres musées, et qui sont d'importance dans l'histoire de l'art. J'ai déjà recueilli une quantité très importante.²²

On 8 April 1871 Fortnum wrote to Frati to ask for help with armorials: 'Italian heraldry is so difficult for us foreigners and the books are not very reliable. . . I have almost finished the catalogue of the maiolica of the South Kensington Museum, but it takes a long time to do the chromolithographs'.²³ (There is no mention of the photographic illustrations stipulated in 1869, and the idea had apparently been abandoned.)

Soon afterwards, Fortnum completed the manuscript. It was prepared for the press at South Kensington by John Hungerford Pollen, Assistant Keeper of Art Collections. On 14 November 1871, Pollen wrote to Fortnum describing himself as the 'editor' and noted that he had altered the phrase 'editor's collection' into 'writer's collection', 'since I possess neither objects nor any real knowledge of them, & you have both'.²⁴

In 1872 Fortnum corrected the proofs. Among the changes he made were the substitution, on the first page, of the Italianate spelling 'Maiolica' for the older English spelling 'Majolica'. Describing the series of Urbino pharmacy jars at Loreto, he emolently crossed out his comment, 'the writer confesses that they did not seem to him of such extraordinary excellence as their fame would have led him to expect'.²⁵

Finally, in November 1872, he was able to write to the authorities.

I have to announce to you the completion, as far as my own labour is concerned, of the Descriptive Catalogue of Majolica, Hispano Moresque Persian and Rhodian wares in the South Kensington Museum, the preparation of which was entrusted to me by order of the Lords of the Committee of Council on Education. The printing of this work has been delayed, from various causes over which I have had no control, my MSS having been completed, with the exception of the smaller and subsequent details some sixteen or more months since. I may add that the delay has caused me considerable inconvenience and additional labour.

The volume has assumed larger dimensions than I could have anticipated, but, having to describe a collection of such importance, and with abundant other material at my command, I could not leave the work without making it as complete a history of, and treatise on, these classes of artistic ceramic productions as laid in my power to write/compile.

With this intent I have referred to all the more important specimens existing in other collections and have given the most extensive series of marks, I have also referred to the work of previous writers on the subject. In illustration of the modes of production of the Italian wares in the XVI century I have thought it well to translate, and prepare an epitome of the MSS by Piccolpasso – our only practical authority on the subject.

I have moreover passed in review all the leading public and private collections of these wares, and to render the volume as complete as possible I have prepared lists of authorities, tables of reference etc.

I trust that the result may meet with their Lordships' approval.²⁶

Fortnum was justly proud. The volume, of over 800 detail-packed pages, was twice the size originally envisaged and superseded, as a map of the subject, all previous works. No evidence has been found that Robinson gave over his notes, and Fortnum would surely have said so in the preface if he had done; but the volume followed Robinson's ambitious conception. Robinson had not been allowed to include a translation of Piccolpasso, but Fortnum provides a twenty-two-page summary. Robinson had planned a series of drawings of marks on pieces in other collections, and Fortnum provided this amply, from pieces he had seen himself and from drawings sent to him by correspondents. In 1859, Fortnum had written to Frati that English *amateurs* wished to publish a corpus of marks on pieces in collections in England and Europe;²⁷ this seems to have been linked to Robinson's plan. The items available to Robinson for the 1862 Exhibition are cogent evidence that an extraordinarily high proportion of the most important pieces of sixteenth-century maiolica

were in England in the third quarter of the nineteenth century,²⁸ and Fortnum records many marked and dated pieces that are no longer available for study. Because his descriptions and his drawings of marks are mostly meticulous and reliable, this wealth of detail constitutes the enduring usefulness of Fortnum's work.

One weakness of his scholarship, by modern standards, is his relative lack of interest in the relationship of *istoriato* maiolica to other arts, and particularly the use of prints by maiolica painters. It is remarkable, for example, that he seems never to have realized that the 'Creation of the Animals' made in Pesaro in 1540, which he bought in 1858, is based on an engraving after a composition by Raphael in the Vatican Loggias.²⁹

The catalogue was published at the beginning of 1873 and the deserved plaudits were duly forthcoming. Andrew Fountaine of Narford Hall, Norfolk, owner of the greatest private maiolica collection then in existence, wrote on 3 April 1873 to thank Fortnum for sending a copy: 'It has quite taken me by surprise I had no idea such a work was in progress

. I take it for the most important work by far which has yet come out on this subject, which during the first half of my life was totally unknown, to the English world at least'.³⁰ Perhaps the most valued tribute came from the only man in England who could match Robinson and Fortnum in knowledge of the field, A. W. Franks of the British Museum. He wrote on 25 March 1873: 'Very many thanks for your beautiful book which seems to me far the best and the most exhaustive of the series issued at South Kensington'.³¹ From abroad, leading ceramic scholars – Luigi Frati, Albert Jacquemart, Baron Charles Davillier – wrote in friendly appreciation.³²

Reviews were more mixed. *The Spectator* rejoiced that 'so thorough an art-critic as Mr Fortnum should have undertaken the task of cataloguing the series', and drew attention to the continuing problems of classifying Islamic pottery. The ceramic expert Mrs Bury Palliser, in *The Academy*, considered that it contained 'all that is now known and more than has hitherto been published on the history of enamelled earthenware in Italy'. *The Athenaeum*, however, complained that 'it is an uncomfortable volume, and had better have been issued in two parts', and suggested that it would have been sensible to unite the collections at the British Museum and at South

Kensington and catalogue them together, while *The Saturday Review* cast doubt on 'the propriety of publishing at public expense a work so costly that it can only be available to the few'.³³

Correspondence with Federigo Argnani

The publication of the catalogue established Fortnum as a leading authority throughout Europe. However, for seventeen years, he published nothing further about maiolica (with the exception of the abbreviated *Handbook* derived from his catalogue and published in 1875³⁴), but instead wrote about his other interests – sculpture, bronzes, rings, gems and seals. What prompted him to return to the subject was exasperation that Italian writers did not give him due credit. In 1890 he reviewed two recent books on Faenza maiolica, *Memorie storiche sulle maioliche di Faenza* (1880), by Carlo Malagola, and *Le ceramiche e Maioliche Faentine* (1889), by Federigo Argnani, he thereby involved himself in the most acrimonious of nineteenth-century maiolica debates.³⁵ Both Faentine writers polemically maintained that there had been no maiolica factory at Cafaggiolo (a Medici villa north of Florence), but that the pieces apparently thus marked had been made in a Faenza workshop called the *Ca Fagiolo*. They were correct to think that too much was sometimes attributed to the workshop at Cafaggiolo, but Malagola's assertion that 'the village of Cafaggiolo is destined to disappear forever from the history of pottery' was demonstrably wrong.

Maiolica marked with various spellings of the word 'Cafaggiolo' had been causing debate for three decades. In his 1852 catalogue of the Pasolini collection, Luigi Frati had hesitated over the attribution of a marked piece: he had speculated that it might have been made at Cafaggiolo, but preferred the hypothesis of a *Ca Fagiolo* in Faenza or elsewhere.³⁶ In 1856, Robinson wrote of 'the manufactory of Cafaggiolo, a castle of the Medici near Florence, where is supposed to have existed a fabrique supported by that celebrated family'.³⁷ In the 1864 Louvre catalogue, Darcel noted that Cafaggiolo products, which had been 'all but unknown' until recently, had 'all at once acquired great importance'.³⁸ Fortnum in 1873 added further marked specimens (including a piece in his own collection marked as made in Galliano, a village near

Cafaggiolo, Figs. 3, 4). The existence of the Cafaggiolo workshop seemed to scholars outside Italy to have been established, even if some attributions were over-enthusiastic.³⁹

Malagola's championing of the *Ca Fagiolo* thesis made a stir in Italy and elicited a sharp critique from Frati, who had accepted the evidence provided by Fortnum and others.⁴⁰ Malagola, whose main concern was with documents, had not cited the South Kensington catalogue and was easily shown to be ignorant of pieces outside Italy; the same was true of Argnani, whom Fortnum held guilty of 'the old-fashioned Italian spirit, combining petty local patriotism with hatred of neighbours and rival cities'.⁴¹ Fortnum's sense of grievance was exacerbated by Angelo Genolini's sumptuous *Maioliche italiane* (1881), which Fortnum correctly accused of pirating large quantities of his material without acknowledgement.

On 6 August 1890 Fortnum sent to Frati an offprint of his review; the accompanying letter, in an excited mixture of Italian and French, makes clear how bruised he felt:

Anni sono, che non ho avuto la felicità di stringerle la mano, ma, però, non mai ho dimenticato la sua gentilezza e che siamo *confrères céramiques*. Le mando adesso un piccolo mio scritto al soggetto stesso e spero che potrebbe leggere

senza difficoltà mentre che sia in Inglese. Les livres de *Malagola*, de *Genolini* et dernièrement celle du prof. *Argnani* m'ont dégouté non peu, quoique je n'ai rien écrit jusqu'à présent. Ni l'un ni l'autre de ces auteurs font mention de mon livre sur les majoliques et l'ignore tout à fait. Il *Malagola* dans la liste de ces references, a compris le petit 'Handbook', lequel, s'il avait lu le notice en face du titre, devait avoir compris qu'il n'était qu'un abstrait popularisé du grand volume. *Genolini* a volé beaucoup de sa matière et des marques. Ed il professore l'ignorait entièrement, tous les trois écrivant e publiant tout près de vous a Bologna, ove era sempre una copia del mio libro nella bibliotheca Comunale! Ella ha ben castigato il *Malagola*. *Barnabei* ha scritto il vero,⁴² sul libro di *Genolini* - adesso il professor *Argnani* ha bisogno di essere un poco bastinato, ed io, mentre forestière, ho preso una canna Inglese in mano, nella speranza di corriger un po la sua ignoranza della literatura della Maiolica, e la sua manifesta manca di sapere gli oggetti nei musei e raccolti dell'Europa e le loro caractere e differenze. Il suo libro, ben imprimé e colle tavole ben colorite, e fatto specialmente col intenzione di tenere ed provare le conclusioni del *Malagola* che la fabbrica di Cafaggiolo in Toscana non mai esisteva! ma che tutti pezzi così firmati erano di fabbrica Faentina!!! Povero Professor se avesse prima studiato un po il mio libro, ed anche il folio de Delange e se avesse veduto una dozzina di pezzi di Cafaggiolo vero, e di Faenza della stessa epoca, forse sarebbe stato un po piu modesto! . . . Je suis dégouté aussi della sua mancanza di cortesia litteraria, dans sa maniere d'ecrire sur l'opinion du feu Monr A. Jacquemart - c'est en mauvais gout et je regrette qu'un Italien a fait si



Figs. 3, 4. Maiolica plate, the 'Heroism of Marcus Curtius', made at Gagliano, near Cafaggiolo, Tuscany, 1547. Ashmolean Museum, Fortnum Gift, WA 1888.CDEF. C410.

mal. Quand vous avez le temps de lire mon article faite me savoir, la prego, vòtre opinion. Spero che siamo insieme e che quel mio piatto fatto in Galiano e gettato (nel scrivere) alla testa sua du Argnani, fara anche un po rumore nella Casa Faggioli di Faenza!!! . . .⁴³

The debate in Italy rumbled on. On 26 December 1896, Ulisse Cantagalli wrote to Fortnum: 'I am longing to see in which side you range yourself in the Cafaggiolo and Faenza question'.⁴⁴ Not till the publication in 1902 of documents discovered by Gaetano Milanesi, giving extensive details of the Cafaggiolo workshop, was the issue settled.⁴⁵

In 1896 Fortnum published *Maiolica*, a treatise in which the material from the South Kensington Catalogue was reworked and updated. Reviews and thank-you letters were unanimous in recognizing this work as definitive; the painter and ceramic student Henry Wallis, for example, wrote to Fortnum: 'It will always remain the standard authority on the subject'.⁴⁶

Argnani was not cowed by Fortnum. He was Director of the civic museum and picture gallery and believed himself to have a patriotic duty to defend the honour of Faenza against those who 'have maliciously attempted to steal the crown, enamelled with every sort of gem of maiolica, with which our Faenza, above all other cities, should be crowned'.⁴⁷ When Fortnum in 1896 sent him a copy of *Maiolica*, Argnani, admitting the limitations of his English, wrote to thank him: 'I have read your recent splendid volume with the greatest interest . . . I have observed that you accept many of the theories of Malagola and myself about the factory at Cafaggiolo in Tuscany, rejecting the theories of Jacquemart; however, I regret that you persist in the belief that there did not exist a Faggioli factory in Faenza'.⁴⁸ Despite their disagreements, the two men, who never met, continued to correspond in respectful terms.⁴⁹ In two letters Argnani described Fortnum as the 'daddy' (*papà*) of maiolica.⁵⁰ Fortnum arranged with Evans for the Ashmolean assistant C. F. Bell to prepare (for the considerable price of £75) a painting of his signed Baldassare Manara dish, the 'Triumph of Time', so that Argnani could publish a chromolithograph of it.⁵¹

Fortnum for his part asked advice about a bowl in the hands of the London dealers Durlacher, which bore the inscription *FATA.IN.FAENZA.I[N].LABOTEGA. DE. M^o. PIERE. BERGA[N]/TI[N]/O* and the date 17 June

1529. Argnani was unable to find any reference in the Faenza records to the Bergantini family and would, he wrote, have been inclined to think the bowl was a forgery, were it not for the respect he had for Fortnum's expertise.⁵² Not until 1939 was the documentation published which demonstrated that the 'Bergantini bowl' is an unquestionably genuine and central documentary piece of Faenza maiolica.⁵³ Fortnum described the bowl in his review of Argnani's 1898 book and added: 'It has since been sold, at a very high figure, and we regret to learn that it has left England'.⁵⁴ In 1983 it passed, through the generosity of Galeazzo Cora and Angiolo Fanfani, to the Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche in Faenza.⁵⁵

A third area where Fortnum and Argnani agreed to differ was the attribution of one of the most beautiful of all Renaissance *istoriato* sets, seventeen plates in the Museo Correr in Venice.⁵⁶ The subject was of special importance to Fortnum, since one of his most prized possessions was his 'Calumny of Apelles', evidently by the same painter, acquired, 'after years of fruitless search', in 1867 (Fig. 5).⁵⁷ In 1873, Fortnum had (equivocally) been inclined to follow Lazari's attribution of the Correr set to Faenza.⁵⁸ However, in 1880 Giovanni Morelli made an ingenious connection with the Urbino artist



Fig. 5. Maiolica plate, the 'Calumny of Apelles', by Nicola da Urbino, Urbino, c.1522. Ashmolean Museum, Fortnum Gift, wa 1896.CDEF. C.410.

Timoteo Viti, who he believed had painted them.⁵⁹ In 1887–8, Émile Molinier attributed them to the maiolica-painter Nicola da Urbino, a view which is now accepted as correct.⁶⁰ In his book of 1896, Fortnum accepted, a touch grudgingly, Molinier's conclusion: 'To M. Émile Molinier we owe, not perhaps so much the immediate discovery as the courageous avowal of a belief which had been lurking in our own mind, and of which the late M. Darcel had also entertained a suspicion, as he stated to us shortly before his lamented death, that these exquisite pieces had been the work of no other than Nicolo Pellipario . . . in Castel Durante previous to Nicolo's emigration to Urbino (c. 1519)' ⁶¹ Argnani was not convinced: he continued to believe the plates Faentine, suggesting an attribution to the painter Giovanni dell'Oriolo.

Fortnum's use of the surname 'Pellipario' is a long-lasting error in maiolica scholarship, for which Robinson and he were responsible. The painter who signed/monogrammed a group of pieces as 'Nicola da Urbino' was the best of Urbino *istoriato* painters in the 1520s.⁶² On the basis of a signed plate he himself gave to the British Museum in 1855, Franks had correctly identified Nicola as the painter of the superlative service made for Isabella d'Este, of which two pieces are also in the British Museum.⁶³ In the Bargello is a plate monogrammed by Nicola, marked as made in 1528 in the Urbino workshop of Guido of Castel Durante. This Guido was known from documents to be the son of 'Nicola Pellipario' of Castel Durante. The hypothesis that Nicola da Urbino and Nicola Pellipario were the same man (so that the Bargello plate would have been painted by the father in the workshop owned by his son) was suggested by Robinson in 1856 and was taken up, in less cautiously qualified form, by Fortnum. The hypothesis (for which the evidence was always tenuous) hardened into orthodoxy, until questioned by Burr Wallen in 1966 and subsequently refuted by the publication of documents showing that Nicola Pellipario was dead before any of the dated works of Nicola da Urbino. 'Nicola da Urbino' is now believed to be quite a different person, Nicola di Gabriele Sbraghe.⁶⁴

Fortnum summed up his claim to empirical objectivity in a review of Argnani's 1898 publication:

The book is eminently Faentine, written by a learned professor of that city. We must regret that Professor Argnani had not given sufficient time to study and

compare what other investigators had recorded, and had not received their well-founded testimony in a more comprehensive and archeological spirit – a desire to ascertain the truth without favour or local bias. Among those writers are such as have had far wider experience and opportunity of comparison, specimen with specimen, in the more abundant and varied collections of England, France, and Germany. Professor Argnani is mistaken in supposing that the more accredited of these writers are actuated by any feeling of favour for or against any particular locality or its productions, their object has been to discover and to establish historical truth. He is somewhat severe on those among them who differ from some of the conclusions to which he has arrived.⁶⁵

This pained *apologia* was Fortnum's final word on the subject: a few weeks after it was printed, he died.

The formation of Fortnum's collection

Fortnum's collection reflects his habits of mind and the influence of South Kensington – it is systematic, representative and documentary.⁶⁶ In the catalogue he wrote late in life, Fortnum characterized the collection as follows: 'Not aspiring to the acquisition of the larger and more grandiose pieces, which even then demanded a prohibitive outlay, his main object was to obtain fairly representative examples of the various Italian fabriques, and of the master potters who worked at them, as also signed and dated or marked pieces, when such could be secured'.⁶⁷ He concentrated on the century from c. 1480 to 1580, and the collection is notably weak in the earlier Italian wares that became of interest, under the influence of Bode, Fairfax Murray and Henry Wallis, to a subsequent generation of collectors and museum curators.⁶⁸ The Ashmolean still has, for instance, no example of the early-fifteenth-century 'oak leaf jars', decorated in relief blue, which are included in the world's other prime collections.

Fortnum's collection was, in great part, formed in the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s, his most active buying being between 1854 and 1862. He started collecting maiolica a few years later than bronzes⁶⁹ and entered the field not only later than French collectors, but also later than some collectors in England, such as Ralph Bernal⁷⁰ and Richard Ford.⁷¹ His first maiolica purchase (Fig. 6) was made in Florence in 1851; this was the same year as Franks's first purchases for the British Museum, and two years before Robinson took up his post at South Kensington. By the time of Robinson's loan exhibition in 1862, to which he lent



Fig. 6. Lustred maiolica dish, Deruta. c. 1500–20. Ashmolean Museum, Fortnum Bequest, WA 1899.CDEF. C422.

fourteen pieces, Fortnum had acquired over fifty examples of Italian Renaissance pottery. Subsequently he made fewer acquisitions, partly because, as an agent for the South Kensington Museum, he conscientiously gave priority to recommending *desiderata* for the Museum. His interest in documentary

pieces developed as he came to know more of the subject: the first important marked piece he acquired was the dish signed as made in the workshop of Girolamo dalle Gabicce in Pesaro (which he gave to the British Museum in 1888), bought in Paris in 1854.⁷² He also had by 1862 a few pieces of Hispano-Moresque, some later European pottery, and a few examples of ancient and Islamic pottery.⁷³ What he really loved were products of the Italian Renaissance: he wrote to Arthur Evans in 1892 that he would 'struggle with all my little strength to uphold the Renaissance' against the 'classic abominations' that were in favour in Oxford;⁷⁴ but he sought to build a collection that would have a comprehensive and didactic character, with some attempt to represent all epochs of the potter's art. His eye was reliable and he made few mistakes: only two probable fakes have been identified among the maiolica – a pseudo-Xanto⁷⁵ (Figs. 7, 8) and a bottle which he thought to be an Italian seventeenth-century imitation of Iznik, of the type then known as 'Candiana'.⁷⁶ He did not 'trade up' and rarely parted with pieces (his 'dolls' or 'babies', as he repeatedly called them), once they had entered his collection.⁷⁷

Occasionally, Fortnum bought from dealers and auctions in London, but his principal sources were dealers in Paris, Italy and Germany. An important group of pieces, including his marked Pesaro plate of



Figs. 7, 8. Maiolica plate, the 'Dream of the Woman of Himera', Italian, before 1859, in imitation of Francesco Xanto Avelli. Ashmolean Museum, Fortnum Gift, WA 1888.CDEF. C447.

1540, was bought from Count Gherardo Prosperi of Ferrara in 1858.⁷⁸ Later, he bought at Paris auctions too, notably two fine pieces at the Alessandro Castellani sale in 1878.⁷⁹ He made friends with foreign curators and experts, such as Lazari⁸⁰ in Venice and Frati⁸¹ in Bologna, and they occasionally advised him on purchases. He was not among the seriously rich English collectors (like Alexander Barker, Richard Wallace, the Rothschilds or, from c. 1865, George Salting) and could rarely buy at the top of the market. Other discriminating English maiolica collectors of limited means in the 1850s, with whom he may be compared, and with whom he

may occasionally have competed, were the Revd Thomas Berney⁸² and John Henderson.⁸³

Fortnum's collection is still the basis of the Ashmolean Museum's holdings of Italian maiolica and the handful of subsequent additions have not altered its character. Although consisting of barely a hundred pieces, and although three of the collector's greatest treasures were given away to the British Museum,⁸⁴ it is a remarkable tribute to Fortnum's knowledge, passion and systematic determination that the Ashmolean collection still ranks, for quality and scholarly importance, among the 'top twenty' in the world.

APPENDIX

Chronological record of those of Fortnum's Italian ceramic acquisitions for which definite dates have been found in his manuscript catalogues or correspondence

Places of purchase, dealers' names and prices paid are given where known. 'C' numbers refer to Fortnum's *Descriptive Catalogue* of 1897, 'W' numbers refer to T. Wilson, *Maiolica* (1989); *CAIR* numbers refer to T. Wilson, *Ceramic Art of the Italian Renaissance* (London, 1987).

1851

C417 (Florence)

C422 (Florence) (Fig. 6)

1852

C420 (Forrest, London)

C443 (Forrest, London)

1854

C402 (Moser, Paris)

C423 (W5) (Signol, Paris)

C424 (Signol, Paris)

C427 (Delange, Paris)

C435 (Delange, Paris)

C437, 438 (W22) (Signol, Paris)

C444 (Mannheim, Paris)

C445 (Mannheim, Paris)

C446 (Delange, Paris)

C450 (W19) (Delange, Paris)

C462 (Mannheim, Paris)

C476 (Signol, Paris)

C498 (Mannheim, Paris)

Pesaro 'Cicero & Caesar' dish given to

British Museum in 1888 (*CAIR* 96)

(Mannheim, Paris, £7 4s od)

1855

C403 (Durlacher, London)

C439 (Izaacs, London)

C442 (W13) (Bernal sale, lot 2044)

C449 (Bernal sale, lot 2035)

C461 (Durlacher, London)

C463 (W26) (Bernal sale, lot 2023)

C464 (W33)

C497 (Durlacher, London)

1856

C401 (W30) (Durlacher, London)

C426 (Pierrat, Paris) (£16)

C432 (Pierrat, Paris)

C440 (W31) (London)

C452 (W21) (Pickert, Furth)

C457, 458 (W28) (London)

C460 (Pickert, Furth)

C477 (Pickert, Furth)

C478 (Pickert, Furth)

C479 (Paris)

C482 (W24) (Pickert, Furth)

Jupiter & Callisto, attributed by Fortnum to

a member of the Fontana family

(London) (not retained in the collection)

- 1858
C418 (W20) (Count Prosperi, Ferrara)
C448 (W16) (Count Prosperi, Ferrara)
C486 (W14) (Count Prosperi, Ferrara)
C485 (Count Prosperi, Ferrara)
C431 (W11) (acquired in Venice through Lazari)
C433
C491 (W4) (Florence) (£5 12s 6d.)
- 1859
C425 (CAIR 193) (Montferrand sale, London, lot 213, £8)
C410 (W27) (Montferrand sale, London, lot 352, £3 15s 0d) (Figs. 3, 4)
C447 (fake) (provenance unknown) (£3 7s. 6d) (Figs. 7, 8)
- 1862
C429 (W8) (Bruschetti, Milan)
C492 (W25) (Bruschetti, Milan) (£38 for the two)
- 1867
C474 (W10) (ex-Pourtales-Gorgier sale, Paris, 1865) (Fig 5)
- 1870
C465,466 (W29) (Depoletti, Rome)
- 1876
C475 (W23) (Bohn sale, London, lot 174)
- 1878
C507 (W12) (Alessandro Castellani sale, Paris, lot 187)
C508 (W15) (Alessandro Castellani sale, Paris, lot 270)
- 1879
C298 (W32, Medici porcelain ewer) (Naples)
- 1880
Medici porcelain ewer (given to British Museum in 1887) (CAIR 247) (Rusca, Florence)
- 1887
C515 (W9) (given by A. W. Franks)
- 1891
C509a (Sir William Drake sale, lot 517)

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Notes and references

- 1 J V G Mallet, 'Storico e storicismo Fortnum, Cantagalli e Castellani', *Faenza* 64 (1978), pp 37-47, T Wilson, 'La collezione Fortnum all'Ashmolean Museum di Oxford', *CeramicAntica* anno 5, no 8 (September 1995), pp 40-1 Fortnum's contacts with Cantagalli at the 'Italian exhibition' in London in 1888 are recorded in G Conti and G Cefariello Grosso, *La maiolica Cantagalli e le manifatture ceramiche fiorentine* (Rome, 1990), p 125, letter from Ulisse Cantagalli in London to his wife 'Stamani è venuto alla mostra il sig Fortnum che mi ha fatto mille elogi ed ha comperato diversa roba' In *The Academy* 33, no 839 (2 June 1888), p 384, Fortnum praised, at the same exhibition, 'the rich display of modern Maiolica, produced by Signor Canta Galli, of Florence, who, himself an artist, has given much time and careful study in the endeavour to reproduce wares similar to artistic character to those of the ancient *maestri* of Urbino, Gubbio, &c Specially excellent are some vases, &c, painted with grotesques on the white ground after the manner of the later Fontana fabrique of Urbino, by a young artist who was reared under the teaching of Signor Canta Galli A pair of such was made for the Prince of Wales a few years ago Some of the lusted pieces, after the mannner of Gubbio, are also very successful' I owe this reference to Jeremy Warren
- 2 Ashmolean Museum, Fortnum Archive, F/7/vi/5
- 3 C D E Fortnum, 'Notes on the "bacini", or dishes of enamelled earthenware, introduced as ornaments to the architecture of some of the churches in Italy, &c &c', *Archaeologia* 42 (1869), pp 379-86 See also Vanke (Fig 1) in this volume *Bacini* had already been of interest to J Marryat, *Collections towards a History of Pottery and Porcelain* (London, 1850), pp 3-7
- 4 H Davies, 'John Charles Robinson's work at the South Kensington Museum', *Journal of the History of Collections* 10 (1998), pp 169-88, and 11 (1999), pp 95-115 For acquisitions of maiolica for the Museum up to 1855, see T Wilson, 'The origins of the maiolica collections of the British Museum and the Victoria & Albert Museum 1851-55', *Faenza* 71 (1985), pp 68-81
- 5 J C Robinson, *Catalogue of the Soulages Collection* (London, 1856), p xiii A testimony to Robinson's precocious perspicacity is his hypothesis (p 4) of a potter making lustreware at Gubbio before Maestro Giorgio This has recently been proven to be true C Fiocco and G Gherardi, 'Lustri precoci di Gubbio', *Faenza* 82 (1996), pp 5-11
- 6 J C Robinson, 'Ceramic art', in J B Waring (ed), *The Art Treasures of the United Kingdom* (London, 1858)
- 7 J C Robinson, 'Maiolica wares', in *Catalogue of the Special Exhibition of Works of Art on loan at the South Kensington Museum 1862* (London, 1863), pp 399-444
- 8 British Library, Additional MS 44398, fol 258

- 9 Public Record Office, Kew, ED 28/15, Minutes of Department of Science and Art, Board of 1 August 1862, item 64
- 10 Victoria & Albert Museum, National Art Library, 'Robinson Reports' (hereafter 'Robinson Reports'), vol 1, part 1, 8 May 1863
- 11 'Robinson Reports', vol 1, part 2, 29 May 1863
- 12 Public Record Office, ED 28/17, item 23 Board of 22 July 1863 I have not found Redgrave's memo For the Board members, see E Bonython, *King Cole* (London, 1982) There is no reference to this meeting in F M Redgrave, *Richard Redgrave, C B, R A A Memoir compiled from his Diary* (London, 1891), but Redgrave's son Gilbert wrote in 1891 to Fortnum of this publication that 'all these particulars and many more, relating to the Board at Sth Kensington Museum, had of course to be omitted as they were confidential' (letter inserted in Fortnum's copy, Ashmolean Library, 928 9 Red R)
- 13 The maiolica described in his *Catalogue of the Works of Art forming the Collection of Robert Napier, of West Shandon, Dumbartonshire (the Shandon Collection)* (London, 1865) had already been described in his *Catalogue of the 'Maiolica' of Robert Napier, Esq of West Shandon, Dumbartonshire* (London, 1859) On 1 September 1896 he wrote to Fortnum (Fortnum Archive, Supplementary box) 'Of late years I have taken no interest in *Maiolica*'
- 14 Public Record Office, ED 28/19, Board of 16 February 1865
- 15 This and the following documents are from the 'Robinson Reports', vol vi, part 2
- 16 Over the following months, correspondence fizzed back and forth, about ethical issues (in particular whether Robinson had acted improperly in making purchases for himself and friends while travelling on official business) and about his pension 'Robinson Reports', vol vi, part 3 On the arguments, see Davies, op cit (note 4), part 2, pp 112–13, A Burton, 'The image of the curator', *V&A Album* 4 (1985), pp 372–87
- 17 Typical was Fortnum's letter to Cole from Rome on 11 April 1870 (Victoria & Albert Museum, National Art Library, Cole Correspondence, Box 16) 'Between the B M and S K M I am fairly disgusted with the puddling and muddling way in which opportunities are lost, and things afterwards bought at three times the price, people sent about at great expense to pay high prices as known agents of the Museums and when the opportunity of benefitting by the services of a volunteer, who perhaps does not know much less of the nature of things than said agents occurs, it is not availed of Looking over my *Maiolica* notes the other day I find a list of desiderata to S K M of signed pieces, some of which I may find, and some are in hands here still, although other finer examples are sold to France, but I do not get any authority to purchase although as I am doing the catalogue I ought to know what you want better than yourselves in that direction at any rate' See also Warren in this volume (p 188), and the extracts from Fortnum's letters to Cole published by Mallet, op cit (note 1), pp 45–7 I am indebted to John Mallet for comments on a draft of the present essay
- 18 Copy letter in Fortnum Archive, F/3/1/2 In the 1897 letter to Robinson published as Annex 2 to the present volume, Fortnum states that he twice declined the invitation to undertake the catalogue
- 19 Fortnum Archive, F/3/1/3, Robinson to Fortnum, from 11 Cornmarket, Oxford, 5 March 1869
- 20 Public Record Office, ED 28/24, item 68 Board of 16 April 1869
- 21 The suggestion that the invitation was an attempt to mollify Fortnum is due to Jeremy Warren and Ben Thomas For the 'Rossellino' see Warren in this volume
- 22 Bologna, Biblioteca dell'Archiginnasio, Carteggio Luigi Frati, VIII/17 This *fondo* (hereafter 'Carteggio Frati') contains thirteen friendly letters from Fortnum to Frati, between 1858 and 1896 Copies of these letters, from which I quote by permission of the Archiginnasio authorities, were obtained by Jeremy Warren Several replies from Frati are in the Fortnum Archive Frati (1815–1902) was Director of the Municipal Library from 1858 and also of the Medieval and Modern section of the Civic Museum from 1878, see *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* vol 50 (1998)
- 23 Translated from Fortnum's Italian, Carteggio Frati, VIII/19 Inserted into Fortnum's 1872 proof copy of the catalogue (Ashmolean Library 951 1 D63a, on deposit in the Department of Western Art, Ashmolean Museum), p 558, is Frati's helpful reply about the Forli tiles and heraldry
- 24 Fortnum Archive, F/3/1/6
- 25 C D E Fortnum, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Maiolica, Hispano-Moresco, Persian, Damascus and Rhodian Wares in the South Kensington Museum* (London, 1873), p 1x1
- 26 Fortnum Archive, F/3/1/10 copy letter
- 27 Carteggio Frati, VIII/15, 19 November 1859
- 28 In 1933 Gaetano Ballardini opined that London contained more first-rate, whole pieces than all other countries, including Italy, put together *Corpus della maiolica italiana*, vol 1 (Rome, 1933), p 10
- 29 T Wilson, *Maiolica Italian Renaissance Ceramics in the Ashmolean Museum* (Oxford, 1989), no 20
- 30 Fortnum Archive, F/3/1/14, 3 April 1873 In a letter a few days before, F/3/1/12, Fountaine had complained about agricultural discontent 'All this is stated to be originated by Jesuits I would sell all my collection, as I foresee nothing but ruin for landed people' The Fountaine collection was sold in 1884, see A Moore, 'The Fountaine collection of maiolica', *Burlington Magazine* 130 (1988), pp 435–47
- 31 Fortnum Archive, F/3/1/13 For Franks, see M Caygill and J Cherry (eds), *A W Franks Nineteenth-century collecting and the British Museum* (London, 1997)
- 32 Fortnum Archive, F/3/1/16–18 On 15 November 1887, Fortnum wrote to Arthur Evans (Fortnum Archive, F/7/iv/8) that, despite some discoveries in the intervening years, the catalogue was still 'looked upon in Italy as the book to refer to'
- 33 *The Spectator* no 2354 (9 August 1873), pp 1015–16, *The Academy* 4, no 72 (15 May 1873), pp 184–7, *The Athenaeum* no 2395 (20 September 1873), p 372, *The Saturday Review*, 22 November 1873, pp 674–5 Fortnum gathered these reviews in a folder now kept in the Department of Antiquities, Ashmolean Museum
- 34 Fortnum Archive, F/3/1/20–21 are letters written to Fortnum in May 1875 by William Maskell, who was editing what he called the 'South Kensington Big-boy' down to 'Handbook' format
- 35 C D E Fortnum, 'Italian works on maiolica', *The Academy* 38, no 953 (9 August 1890), pp 114–17 Shortly afterwards, Fortnum received a copy of a review of Argenti's book, corroborating his own position, by U Rossi, 'Faenza e

- Cafaggiolo', in *Arte e storia* (1890) Fortnum wrote a further letter, reporting Rossi's conclusions, to *The Academy*, which was published on 6 September, vol 38, no 957, p 205
- 36 L Frati, *Del Museo Pasolini in Faenza, Descrizione* (Bologna, 1852), p 6 note 5 'Potrebbe forse a prima giunta credersi da taluno che il luogo qui indicato fosse Cafaggiolo villaggio della Toscana ma il non conoscersi che mai sia stata ivi antica fabbrica di maiolica, e più anche il confronto della scritta in *chafaggiolo* con quella della nota antecedente in *cha fagizotto* (la quale non può punto ritenersi corrompimento della prima) esclude un tale supposto Avviso piuttosto che si abbia a leggere in *cha faggiolo*, in *cha fagizotto* per in casa ca Faggiolo, in casa o in ca Fagizotto, come in altra di Faenza si ha in *caxa Pirota*'
 - 37 Robinson, op cit (note 5), p 35
 - 38 A Darcel, *Musée de la Renaissance. Notice des sciences peintes italiennes, hispano-moresques et françaises* (Paris, 1864), p 97 Another scholar to exaggerate the production of Cafaggiolo was A Jacquemart, *Histoire de la Céramique* (Paris, 1875)
 - 39 On 4 September 1890, Wilhelm Bode wrote to Fortnum from Italy (Fortnum Archive, Supplementary box) 'There is more confusion now as before, for they call now all the earliest Majolica, of the xivth and xvth cent, Caffagiolo, though they have been made nearly everywhere in Italy'
 - 40 L Frati, 'Le "Memorie storiche sulle maioliche di Faenza" del dottor Carlo Malagola', *Nuova antologia di scienze lettere ed arti*, 2nd ser 23 (1 October 1880), pp 558-68
 - 41 Fortnum, op cit (note 35)
 - 42 F Barnabei, Review of Genolini in *La domenica letteraria*, 23 April 1882, with a delicately obfuscated charge against Genolini of plagiarism of Fortnum's book, which Barnabei calls 'il libro più autorevole chi io mi conosca intorno alla maiolica italiana'
 - 43 Carteggio Frati, VIII/22
 - 44 Fortnum Archive, Supplementary box
 - 45 G Guasti, *Di Cafaggiolo e d'altre fabbriche di ceramiche in Toscana secondo studi e documenti in parte raccolti da Comm Gaetano Milanese* (Florence, 1902)
 - 46 15 November 1896 Fortnum Archive, Supplementary box,
 - 47 Fortnum Archive, F/2/ix/11, 28 February 1899 'Io invece sono stato e sono un semplice artista che, sorretto unicamente da amore dell'arte e del mio paese, dopo aver riuniti migliaia d'esemplari di maioliche faentine dissotterrati nella nostra città, e qualche centinaio di tutti gli altri centri di fabbriche italiane nel mio studio quindi posso credere d'essermi messo in grado di stabilire i caratteri delle diverse epoche, e dei diversi artisti di ciascuna fabbrica in confronto delle faentine Non aspiro pertanto al nome di antiquario e di archeologo ch'Ella mi prodiga Ho avuto in mente di compiere un'opera patriottica, ed anche il mio dovere Non ho avuto in anima di denigrare nessuna fama di fabbriche e di artisti, però se alle volte ho trascorso con scrittori insipienti ho avuto l'intimo convincimento di doverlo fare, perchè costoro malignamente hanno tentato di rubare la corona, smaltata di ogni sorta di gemma di maioliche, di cui dev'essere cinta, sopra tutte le altre città, la nostra Faenza'
 - 48 Fortnum Archive, Supplementary box, letter of 28 October 1896 'Ho letto col massimo interesse il recente splendido volume ho poi constatato con piacere che Ella accetta molte delle teorie del Malagola e mie sulla fabbrica di Cafaggiolo di Toscana, sconfessando quelle dell' Jacquemart, però mi spiace ch' Ella persista nel credere che non sia esistito altrimenti una fabbrica Fagioli in Faenza'
 - 49 I am grateful to Carmen Ravanelli Guidotti, Lorella Ranzi and Sauro Casadei for kind but unsuccessful attempts to trace Fortnum's letters to Argnani in Faenza archives
 - 50 Argnani uses the word *Papà* in letters of 2 and 16 December 1898, Fortnum Archive, F/2/ix/8-9
 - 51 F Argnani, *Il Rinascimento delle ceramiche maioliche in Faenza* (Faenza, 1898)
 - 52 Argnani to Fortnum, 16 December 1898 and 13 January 1899, Fortnum Archive, F/2/ix/9-10. Argnani remained sceptical 'mi farebbe dubitare di una falsificazione se non reputassi la S V per il più grande cultore sperimentato dell'arte leggiadrissima delle maioliche', and then 'Sarà adunque una scoperta da aggiungere pregio nuovissimo alla nostra industria' lo vorrei sperare ancora, ma Ella mi permetta di non persuadermene'
 - 53 G Liverani, 'Fata in Faenza in la bottega de Maestro Piero Bergantino', *Faenza* 27 (1939), pp 3-9, and the documents published in the same issue by C Grigioni
 - 54 C D E Fortnum, 'On the maiolica of Faenza', *The Nineteenth Century* 45, no 264 (February 1899), pp 273-81
 - 55 C Ravanelli Guidotti, *Thesaurus di opere della tradizione di Faenza* (Faenza, 1998), pp 351-5
 - 56 H Wallis, *XVII Plates by Nicola Fontana da Urbino at the Correr Museum, Venice A study in early XVIth cent^h maiolica* (London, 1903), Wallis gives a lucid account of the changing attributions
 - 57 Wilson, op cit (note 29), no 10
 - 58 Fortnum, op cit (note 25), pp 484-5, 530, 534
 - 59 G Morelli, *Die Werke italienischer Meister in den Galerien von München, Dresden und Berlin* (Leipzig, 1880), p 348 'muss Timoteo selbst die herrlichen Bildchen auf die Teller gemalt haben'
 - 60 E Molinier, 'La faience à Venise', *L'Art* 13-14 (1887-8)
 - 61 C D E Fortnum, *Maiolica* (Oxford 1896), p 177
 - 62 See, for instance, T Wilson, *Ceramic Art of the Italian Renaissance* (London, 1987), pp 44-51
 - 63 Fortnum, op cit (note 25), p 324 The marked plate formerly owned by Franks (Wilson, op cit (note 62), no 63) is now sometimes regarded as a studio work, rather than wholly by Nicola himself J V G Mallet, 'C D E Fortnum and Italian maiolica of the Renaissance', *Apollo* 108 (1978), p 400
 - 64 F Negroni, 'Nicolò Pellipario ceramista fantasma', *Notizie da Palazzo Albani* 14 (1986), pp 13-20
 - 65 Fortnum, op cit (note 54)
 - 66 For descriptions of the collection, see Mallet, op cit (note 63), Wilson, op cit (note 29), Wilson, op cit (note 1)
 - 67 C D E Fortnum, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Maiolica in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, Fortnum Collection* (Oxford, 1897), p v
 - 68 In the letter of September 1890 (note 39), Bode wrote of his 'small but interesting collection of the very earliest pots, in the S K M nearly wanting when you made the catalogue' For Wallis, see Wilson, op cit (note 62), p 20 Both the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum acquired early maiolica which had belonged to Fairfax Murray, these acquisitions are the subject of a study in progress by Paul Tucker
 - 69 See J Warren's introduction to *Renaissance Master Bronzes*

- from the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford *The Fortnum Collection* (Daniel Katz Gallery, London, 1999) and Nicholas Penny, *Catalogue of European Sculpture in the Ashmolean Museum 1540 to the Present Day* (Oxford 1992), vol 1, pp xvii–xxx
- 70 For Bernal and other pre-1850 collections, see Wilson, op cit (note 4). There are useful notes on nineteenth-century maiolica collectors in Fortnum, op cit (note 25), pp xcvi–cix, and in the 1850 and successive editions of J. Marryat, *Collections towards a History of Pottery and Porcelain*
- 71 J. V. G. Mallet in ‘The Ford collection’, *Walpole Society* 60 (1998), 1, pp 82–9
- 72 Wilson, op cit (note 62), no 96
- 73 See Vanke in this volume, pp 219–31
- 74 Letter to Arthur Evans, 1 June 1892, Fortnum Archive, F/7/1x/30
- 75 Fortnum, op cit (note 67), pp 76–7, no C447, ‘one of Xanto’s carelessly-painted pieces’. The subject, the ‘Dream of the Woman of Himera’ (Valerius Maximus, I, vii, 2, 6), is after Xanto, e.g. versions (a) from the Pesaro service of 1535, J. Triolo, ‘The Armorial Maiolica of Francesco Xanto Avelli’, Ph.D. thesis, Pennsylvania State University 1996, pp 353–4, M. Bellini and G. Conti 1964, *Maioliche italiane del rinascimento* (Milan, 1964), p 145, (b) one dated 1540 in the V&A, B. Rackham *Victoria and Albert Museum, Catalogue of Italian Maiolica* (London, 1940), no 638, and (c) one sold from the Pringsheim collection, Sotheby’s, 7–8 June 1939, lot 82, but neither these nor any of the versions known to me by followers of Xanto corresponds exactly with the present dish. Rackham cites the Ashmolean plate as genuine, but a suggestion by J. V. G. Mallet, *Burlington Magazine* 129 (1987), p 332, that it is mid-nineteenth-century was confirmed by thermoluminescence analysis by Doreen Stoneham in the Oxford Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art. It may possibly have been made in the Ginori workshop, see Wainwright in this volume, pp 173–5, for Ginori
- 76 Fortnum, op cit (note 67), p 92, no C499
- 77 One Italian piece listed in the 1857 manuscript catalogue which he seems subsequently to have given away or sold was an *istoriato* plate of Jupiter and Callisto
- 78 Fortnum wrote to Frati from Florence announcing the acquisition of five plates on 1 January 1859. Carteggio Frati VIII/14
- 79 Wilson, op cit (note 29), nos 12, 15
- 80 Lazari helped him acquire his Gubbio ‘Decollation of John the Baptist’ (Wilson, op cit (note 29), no 11), and wrote from the Museo Correr announcing it was at Fortnum’s disposal on 9 November 1858. Fortnum Archive, F/2/x/1
- 81 For Frati assisting Fortnum with purchases, see J. Warren, ‘Fortnum and the Della Robbia’, *Apollo* 145 (1997), pp 55–7. For the wider context of Englishmen buying art in Italy in these years, see J. Fleming, ‘Art dealing in the Risorgimento’, *Burlington Magazine* 115 (1973), pp 4–6, 121 (1979), pp 492–508, 568–80
- 82 B. Rackham, ‘The Berney collection of Italian maiolica’, *Burlington Magazine* 61 (1932), pp 208–19. The collection was sold at Sotheby’s, London, on 18 June 1946
- 83 For Henderson, who died in 1878, bequeathing his collection to the British Museum, see *Dictionary of National Biography*, Wilson, op cit (note 62), p 19, and Vanke in this volume, pp 220–2, 226. He was a friend of Fortnum’s and left him his Oriental bronzes
- 84 Wilson, op cit (note 62), nos 96, 246, 247. Franks’s gift to Fortnum in 1887 of a delicious maiolica plate (Wilson, op cit (note 29), no 9) was no doubt done with a view to benefactions from Fortnum to the British Museum