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Painting as Medicine in Early Modern Rome: Giulio Mancini and the Efficacy of Art

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emphasis was transferred from material production to invention and the development of a style, is placed within the competitive context of emerging capitalism and urbanization. The answer to the questions Williams asks—did his new collaborative method result from his recognition that the education of artists was changing, and was it motivated by his desire to enlarge the role of his pupils in planning in order to equip them for their future?—would seem to be yes (230).

Williams's knowledge of the literature and his familiarity with the works is evident on every page, yet what commands our attention here is the overarching theme of Raphael as the paragon of the artist who exemplifies virtue in both his art and his life. It is a bold claim at this moment when morality seems to have been relegated as a quaint relic of history, and it reawakens in at least this art historian a renewed sense of the nobility of our enterprise.

Cambridge University Press should be congratulated by a grateful community of scholars for the reintroduction of long-mourned footnotes in lieu of inaccessible endnotes. The familiar images are reproduced modestly in black and white and serve as aide-mémoires; they can be easily Googled if we need to refer to them in color.

Marcia B. Hall, *Temple University*

Painting as Medicine in Early Modern Rome: Giulio Mancini and the Efficacy of Art. Frances Gage.
University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016. xvi + 228 pp. $89.95.

The name of the physician Giulio Mancini is familiar in the history of painting in Rome in the early years of the seventeenth century. Not only was he a highly active figure within the world of art then, but he also wrote several texts about art and what now we would call connoisseurship which, if not published, seem to have been widely known. To some historians these writings have seemed unoriginal, and Mancini himself—though this is a different issue—was taken to be a less than admirable character, an atheist and someone who used whatever medical gifts he had unscrupulously, as one contemporary put it, merely to further his artistic interests. Yet recently scholars have detected a richer aspect to his activities and one, beyond the usefulness of all he noted about paintings and artists, that was based on techniques of attribution that, as Carlo Ginzburg suggested, even had an epistemological value: it was rooted in medical ideas of diagnosis and conjectures about disease, which as a state is, like the wonders of art, never fully visible but recognizable by doctors in the evident physical symptoms of their patients.

It is such an idea of the value of Mancini that Frances Gage examines further here, taking painting to be possibly a form of medicine, not only perfectly balanced in its perfection—that might be value enough—but also healing and transfiguring its beholders

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in their minds and then, through the imagination, in their bodies. It has often been claimed, and not without reason, that the decline of the idea of cult objects in the Reformation neutralized the power of the image itself, heralding in its place the idea of art and the social idea of collecting. Yet this is not the whole story. And what Gage examines here is the idea that paintings might act still as agents, possessing magical powers that could affect the health of all those who looked at them. It is easy to doubt such an account but, as Gage reminds us, there were texts enough in the sixteenth century and later that spoke of art as a part of the prevention of illness, this last being a topic especially debated in the Roman court where so much depended, politically and socially, on the health of the Pope. The healing powers of art had long been recognized; here Petrarch was an early witness. But now such possibilities were extended beyond the realms of language—this was what Petrarch was speaking of—to those of sight, as when it was suggested that certain colors, "greene and sky colours" as an English physician put it, were immediately beneficial. Such had been imagined by Marsilio Ficino, when he spoke of green as synonymous with life and youthfulness. But now, at this time, it was possible to imagine that landscape painting, as in Poussin and so many others, served not only as a surrogate for nature itself but, as Gage emphasizes, something to embody deliberate structures that could engender health, cheerfulness, and recreative effects. And this was not only for the individual beholder, but also for the civic body as a whole, as when Mancini defined history painting, the most public form of art, not only by its narrative, but also by its whole compositional structure. Here the frescoes by Raphael were perfect examples, showing significant actions in which the subsidiary figures are appropriately subordinate participants. "I do not know," Mancini wrote, "how to see what (more) can be desired in a painter" (128).

There is much in this study, in what Gage herself calls its unexpected turns, of great interest: notes on the impressionable female imagination; the idea that physiologists might predict the span of life from the observation of what Mancini called a simple portrait; contemporary comments on the intellectual life of Rome; the depiction of monstrous forms; the idea that erotic images might be used in the bedroom to help the process of reproduction; and even the placement of pictures in a household. All this is laid out by Gage in crisp and scrupulous scholarship in a text that is exceptionally pleasant to read. All students of painting in Rome—and beyond—will need to take note of it.

David Cast, *Bryn Mawr College*

A Rothschild Renaissance: Treasures from the Waddesdon Bequest. Dora Thornton. London: British Museum Press, 2015. 352 pp. £30.

This exemplary, beautifully produced volume does justice to its subject matter not only by offering extensive, assiduously researched catalogue entries for forty objects of the

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