While the writings of early modern medical practitioners habitually touch on performances and ceremony, few illuminate them as clearly as the Protestant physicians Felix Platter and Thomas Platter the Younger, who studied in Montpellier and practiced in their birth town of Basel, or the Catholic physician Hippolytus Guarinius, who was born in Trent, trained in Padua and practiced in Hall near Innsbruck.

During his student years and brilliant career as early modern Basel’s most distinguished municipal, court and academic physician, Felix Platter built up a wide network of private, religious and aristocratic patients. His published medical treatises and private journal record his professional encounters with them as a healer. They also offer numerous vivid accounts of theatrical events experienced by Platter as a scholar, student and gifted semi-professional musician, and during his Grand Tour and long medical career. Here Felix Platter’s accounts, many unavailable in translation, are examined together with relevant extracts from the journals of his younger brother Thomas Platter, and Guarinius’s medical and religious treatises. Thomas Platter is known to Shakespeare scholars as the Swiss Grand Tourist who recorded a 1599 London performance of Julius Caesar, and Guarinius’s descriptions of quack performances represent the earliest substantial written record of commedia dell’arte Lazzi, or comic stage business.

These three physicians’ records of ceremony, festival, theatre and marketplace diversions are examined in detail, with particular emphasis on the reactions of ‘respectable’ medical practitioners to healing performance and the performances of healing. Taken as a whole, their writings contribute to our understanding of many aspects of early modern healthcare: in carnival and other routine manifestations of the Christian festive year, in the extraordinary performance and ceremony of court festivals, and above all in the rarely welcomed intrusions of quacks and other itinerant performers.


TITLES IN THE SERIES INCLUDE

- Medicine, Government and Public Health in Philip II’s Spain: Shared Interests, Competing Authorities
- Marie L. Oussa

- Nursing before Nightingale, 1800–1860
- Carol Helmsdottir and Judith Golden

- Secrets and Knowledge in Medicine and Science, 1500–1800
- Edited by Elaine Leong and Aksha Rankin

- Horen de Rosshuld, 1827–1947
- Harry W. Paul

- The Anatomist-Antagonist: An Experimental Discipline in Enlightenment Europe
- Andrew Cunningham

- Medicine, Government and Public Health in Philip II’s Spain: Shared Interests, Competing Authorities
- Marie L. Oussa

- Nursing before Nightingale, 1800–1860
- Carol Helmsdottir and Judith Golden

- Secrets and Knowledge in Medicine and Science, 1500–1800
- Edited by Elaine Leong and Aksha Rankin

- Horen de Rosshuld, 1827–1947
- Harry W. Paul

- The Anatomist-Antagonist: An Experimental Discipline in Enlightenment Europe
- Andrew Cunningham

While the writings of early modern medical practitioners habitually touch on performances and ceremony, few illuminate them as clearly as the Protestant physicians Felix Platter and Thomas Platter the Younger, who studied in Montpellier and practiced in their birth town of Basel, or the Catholic physician Hippolytus Guarinius, who was born in Trent, trained in Padua and practiced in Hall near Innsbruck.

During his student years and brilliant career as early modern Basel’s most distinguished municipal, court and academic physician, Felix Platter built up a wide network of private, religious and aristocratic patients. His published medical treatises and private journal record his professional encounters with them as a healer. They also offer numerous vivid accounts of theatrical events experienced by Platter as a scholar, student and gifted semi-professional musician, and during his Grand Tour and long medical career. Here Felix Platter’s accounts, many unavailable in translation, are examined together with relevant extracts from the journals of his younger brother Thomas Platter, and Guarinius’s medical and religious treatises. Thomas Platter is known to Shakespeare scholars as the Swiss Grand Tourist who recorded a 1599 London performance of Julius Caesar, and Guarinius’s descriptions of quack performances represent the earliest substantial written record of commedia dell’arte Lazzi, or comic stage business.

These three physicians’ records of ceremony, festival, theatre and marketplace diversions are examined in detail, with particular emphasis on the reactions of ‘respectable’ medical practitioners to healing performance and the performances of healing. Taken as a whole, their writings contribute to our understanding of many aspects of early modern healthcare: in carnival and other routine manifestations of the Christian festive year, in the extraordinary performance and ceremony of court festivals, and above all in the rarely welcomed intrusions of quacks and other itinerant performers.


M.A. Katritzky

Healing, Performance and Ceremony in the Writings of Three Early Modern Physicians

Hippolytus Guarinius and the Brothers Felix and Thomas Platter