Healing, performance and ceremony in the writings of three early modern physicians: Hippolytus Guarinonius and the brothers Felix and Thomas Platter

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While the writings of early modern medical practitioners habitually touch on performance 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 towns of Basle, or the Catholic physician Hippolytus Guarinonius, who was born in Trent, trained in Padua and practiced in Hall near Innsbruck. During his student years and brilliant career as early modern Basle’s most distinguished municipal, court and academic physician, Felix Platter built up a wide network of private, religious and aristocratic patients. He published medical treatises and private journal records 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 Guarinonius’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 Guarinonius’s descriptions of quack performances represent the earliest substantial written record of commedia dell’arte’s early modern European manifestations: court festivals, and above all, the rarely welcomed intrusions of quacks and other itinerant performers.


Healing, Performance and Ceremony in the Writings of Three Early Modern Physicians
Hippolytus Guarinonius and the Brothers Felix and Thomas Platter

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