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## In View of the Tower: Swiss Encounters with the Tower of London

This essay examines accounts of Swiss visitors to London in the early modern period, with a special eye towards visits to the Tower of London, the city's most significant landmark. It probes what accounts of these visits suggest about Anglo-Swiss cross-cultural exchanges and awareness. By surveying what Swiss visitors could expect to see in the Tower and what they wrote about it, it is possible to begin to track the place the Tower seems to have held in Swiss popular consciousness and how much the site had already acquired the connotations with 'dark histories' of imprisonment and torture that have so plagued the Tower's national and international reputation since at least the nineteenth century. Ultimately, it argues that Swiss visitors' experiences at the Tower from as early as the sixteenth century reveal that features of the Tower's associations with violence were on display for visitors centuries before the Victorian surge of interest in the gothic. In making this argument, this essay complicates and reframes the Tower's history as a museum by showing how individualised visitors' experiences of the Tower were, even when those visitors were following set routes.

Keywords: Tower of London; tourists; torture; Anglo-Swiss travel

In early modern England, the Tower of London was both a local landmark and a headquarters of statecraft. People attended executions of Tower prisoners on nearby Tower Hill and walked freely through the fortress' gates. Chronicles, plays, and pamphlets highlighted its long history and centrality to state affairs, including its use as a prison. The Tower was what the Tower is today—a monument of the crown whose walls stood as a symbol of English identity (Deiter 2). Alongside its historical and contemporary symbolism, the Tower housed collections of treasures and stores of military might unparalleled in England. For this reason, visitors

from all over England and the Continent did not just come to the outskirts of the Tower, but toured inside it, too.<sup>1</sup>

Scholars have long acknowledged the links between England and the Swiss cantons in the medieval period and beyond, but few have investigated the considerable interest the Swiss took not just in England's Reformation, but also in its buildings and institutions.<sup>2</sup> This essay considers what accounts of early modern Swiss visitors to the Tower indicate about public access to the Tower and the opportunities available to some (but not all) visitors. By surveying what Swiss visitors could expect to see in the Tower and what they wrote about it, it is possible to begin to track the place the Tower seems to have held in Swiss popular consciousness—to the extent such a thing existed in the early modern period—or at least among Swiss visitors to London and high-level political or religious figures who remained on the Continent. Thomas Platter the Younger's account of his 1599 visit to the Tower warrants particular attention. Platter, a Basel doctor and son of a scholar-cum-ropemaker, has become the most famous early modern Swiss visitor to England, in large part because of the impressions he recorded of London theatre (Robson-Scott, *German Travellers* 71–72; Larminie, “Platter, Thomas”). Even when historians have referenced or considered Platter's visit to the Tower, they have failed to interrogate a unique feature of the account: Platter's interaction with the Tower's carceral use.

In addition to Swiss accounts of interactions with the Tower of London, the accounts of visitors from other parts of the Continent provide useful context through which to examine the experiences of Swiss travellers. They also offer a key test through which we might consider whether the experiences of visitors such as Platter were, in fact, exceptional. This sort of case study requires a wide and inclusive understanding of Swiss identity, even where use of the sweeping term “Swiss” might be anachronistic. “Swiss” here includes visitors from towns and cities that are

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this research were completed during the University of Oxford Humanities Division Knowledge Exchange Fellowship “Torture and Execution at the Tower of London” (Principal Investigator: Professor Steven Gunn) and the University of Oxford John Fell-funded project “(Hi)stories of Violence: Myth-making, Imprisonment, and the Cultural Identity of the Tower of London” (Principal Investigator: Dr Hannah Skoda). Thanks are due to the editors and anonymous peer reviewer for their helpful suggestions, which have improved this study greatly.

<sup>2</sup> This study builds on the work of scholars including Adrien Chopard, Lukas Erne, Arnold Lätt, Christopher Storrs, and John Wraight.

now part of Switzerland and people originally from other parts of Europe who spent portions of their adult lives in Swiss cities.

## 1. Visiting London

When Rudolf Bucher wrote of his visit to London in 1696 with a group from Bern, he called the Tower, “weg[en] gefangens[c]hafft grosser he[rr]n und sonst berühmt[en],” a place famous because of the imprisonment of great lords and for other reasons ([Bucher] 34v).<sup>3</sup> Even in the early modern world, the Tower had a reputation that extended across the English Channel. By the later middle ages, the Tower Wharf had become a landing site for foreign dignitaries. From there, as early as the fifteenth century, ambassadors and foreign royalty could enter the Tower and view the crown’s collections of armour, ordnance, and jewels.<sup>4</sup> But the Tower was not only a diplomatic stage or a state headquarters. It was also a tourist site. There were travellers from the Continent and (from the seventeenth century on) beyond, who were making their way through a list of sites in England. Even as the Tower continued to function as a state prison, record office, armoury, mint, and storehouse of ordnance and jewels, its gates were open daily to a wide array of state officials, labourers, servants (to officials and prisoners alike), and visitors coming to see incarcerated family and friends or to gaze at the Tower lions in the fortress’s menagerie. Along with the Royal Exchange, Westminster, St. Paul’s Cathedral, and a number of other places across and outside London, the Tower was an almost essential feature of a tour of England.

The Tower’s use as a prison seems to have been widely known, particularly as a site of imprisonment for royals and members of the nobility. Rudolf Gwalther, for instance, had visited the Tower in 1537 and commented on the Tower’s reputation in 1573 as a place of no return for members of the nobility incarcerated in its walls (Gwalther, “Rudolf Gwalthers Reise” 452; *Letter to Augustin Blarer*). Sharing gossip about

<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to Stefanie Heeg, who first alerted me to this account, and to Professors Steven Gunn, Lyndal Roper, and Sheilagh Ogilvie who assisted in deciphering the manuscript. Thanks are also due to Dr Noah Regensass, who generously shared his transcription. Although the account is anonymous, it is thought to be associated with Bucher (“Academische Reißbeschreibung, 1696-1698” [catalogue record]).

<sup>4</sup> References to the Tower’s diplomatic function abound. See, for example, Nichols ii.78–79, 88; Blount 103r; *Diary of Henry Machyn* 79; CSPV xiv.322; Deiter 48, 56–58, 61; Keay 45, 48–49; Borg, “The Museum” 69.



the machinations and downfall of Henry Fitzalan, the earl of Arundel, Gwalther noted: “in arce Londinensi degunt, unde raro salvis suis capitib[us] nobiles exeunt,” that is, “they spend their days in the Tower of London, a place from which nobles rarely leave with their heads still attached” (Gwalther, *Letter to Augustin Blarer*).<sup>5</sup> Yet the degree to which the Tower was open to the public belies its state importance and its associations with violence and captivity. Despite—or perhaps because of—its role as England’s most important state headquarters and prison, it was also a place to which the English (and their neighbours) laid claim, both in historical interest and quotidian urban public interaction.

Scholarly attention, most recently by the University of Basel’s Swiss-BritNet project, has shown that Anglo-Swiss cultural exchange and travel were relatively common. Most of the Swiss who came to England to study or to join the households of prominent political and religious figures of the period left no footprint of visits to the Tower. Where records of itineraries do exist, they are often ambiguous. Consider Casper Waser’s account of his 1591 and 1592 trip, for which the itinerary lists only visits to Westminster Palace and “similiaq[ue] visu digna,” the usual places for visitors (Waser, “The British Itinerary” 261, 275, 293; “Hodoeporica Germanicum” 130, 137). Presumably the Tower fell into that category, or at least it could. Among other visitors, amid the major changes to religious orthodoxy of the mid sixteenth century, many may have had little interest in going to the Tower as “tourists” and either came to the fortress only to visit incarcerated friends and correspondents or avoided it altogether. An exception is Josua Maler’s visit in 1551.

A Zürich theologian in training, in his later autobiography Maler curtly described visiting the Tower as part of his educational trip to England as a young man. A strong fortress, he claimed, the two features worthy of mention were the presence of lions and a leopard and the fact that the Tower was the prison for the nobility and for princes (Robson-Scott, “Josua Maler’s Visit” 350; Maler 163–164). Maler’s account is typical not just of Swiss visitors to the Tower but of all foreign visitors over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Accounts of tours of the Tower often follow a similar form, variously describing visits to the menagerie, armouries and ordnance stores, the mint, or the crown jewels. Not all were impressed by what they saw (“England in 1609” 81;

<sup>5</sup> This is my own loose translation. A similar sentiment was echoed in other accounts, including that of the Brandenburg tourist Paul Hentzner in 1598. *Paul Hentzner’s Travels* 27; Deiter 146–147; Jenkinson 239–240; [Grenade] 87.

Robson-Scott, *German Travellers* 56; “*Jähriger Rayß Beschreibung*” i.28; Borg, “The Museum” 69; [Grenade] 158).<sup>6</sup> A small portion of the accounts reference viewing some features of incarceration, including Traitor’s Gate, the ceremonial axe used in trial processions, and “the spot” where the second earl of Essex had been recently executed (“England in 1609” 81; Dieter 56, 74–76, 146–147; “Diary of the Journey” 15). A 1609 account of a visit by the baron of Offembach described seeing a prisoner and the Bloody Tower “in which Richard III is said to have murdered his two nephews” (“England in 1609” 81; Dieter 75–76). More frequently, though, visits seem to have focused on the Tower’s grandeur and only occasionally referenced its carceral function.

A Lausannois living in London in the second half of the seventeenth century, Guy Miège advised visitors to London in his 1691 *New State of England* (Larminie, “Miege, Guy”). Visitors should see the Tower and other monuments, including the Custom House, exchanges, and so on, which he described as “Things worthy any Strangers Curiosity to view, at least a good part of them” (Miège 284). Miège mapped the governance of the Tower and the operations of the state record office, mint, and the fortress’ role as “the chief Prison, where persons of quality that are charged with Crimes against the Government are kept in Custody” (286–289). The Bernese Bât Louis de Muralt visited in 1694, not long after the first publication of Miège’s treatment, but his descriptions of London remained unpublished for decades (Robson-Scott, *German Travellers* 120). The Tower, Muralt advised, “well deserves a whole Letter; and generally speaking, it takes up a great deal of room in the Pocket-Books of the Gentlemen that travel” (*Letters Describing the Character* 79). He, too, claimed that the Tower was “the Prison for People of Quality” (*Letters Describing the Character* 79). As scholars have long noted, many of the descriptions of London included in various early modern visitors’ accounts appear remarkably similar to the work of chroniclers, including William Camden, and to earlier surveys and travelogues (ffoulkes i.66; Thomas Platter’s *Travels* 138; Robson-Scott, “Some Notes” 459–461; Robson-Scott, *German Travellers* 70–71, 82–83, 211–214; “England in 1609” 75; Dieter 57–58). Occasionally, it is difficult to distinguish what visitors actually saw from what they expected to see or what they had read about somewhere else.

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<sup>6</sup> I am grateful to Stefanie Heeg, who informed me of the account published in “*Jähriger Rayß Beschreibung*.”

Visitors were welcome in the Tower, but only if they paid fees and agreed to move around the fortress under the supervision and guidance of a yeoman warder. Miège noted this aspect of the warders' duties, claiming that "at the Gates they examine every Stranger that offers to go in, and before admittance [...] those that bear Swords must leave 'em in their hands, till they go out" (289). In 1683, two northern German students at Rostock were led around the Tower by a yeoman warder, whom they described as an "Englischen Schweitzer" (*Beschreibung einer Reise* 37). Given the limited and well-documented body of yeoman warders, it is clear that "Schweitzer" was being used in the figurative sense—in the same way that Shakespeare's Claudius had cried out, "Where are my Swissers?", as a general name for guards (*Hamlet* 4.5.97; "Switzer"). Nearly thirty years after the Rostock students' visit, the Frankfurt scholar Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach claimed that he, too, had been forced to hand over his sword to the Swiss guards who then led him around the Tower (*London in 1710* 38). Variants of the term must have become a sobriquet for the Tower warders, whose distinctive uniforms and carrying of halberds might have inspired reputational or aesthetic associations with the papal Swiss Guard. Whatever else may be true, use of the term in the context of visits to the Tower highlights the deep and well-established cultural entanglements at play. To speak of an "Englischen Schweitzer" or the Tower of London meant something, not just in local or regional contexts, but from London to Zürich and beyond.

## 2. Different Visitors, Different Tours

There was a difference between official diplomatic visits and unofficial tours. For one thing, diplomatic visits seem not to have been subject to the fees imposed on other visitors. At the end of the sixteenth century, warders might charge visitors access to each room or building they entered at a price of as much as 3s. (*Thomas Platter's Travels* 160-163). Charges were not standardized and depended on both the individual warders and visitors (Parnell 46). Although admission prices fluctuated over the next few centuries, even in the early eighteenth century a Swiss visitor commented on the significant expense (*Foreign View of England* 91).<sup>7</sup> These were prices of entry cost prohibitive to much of the population. The yeoman warders,

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<sup>7</sup> The expense of entry continued and provoked major debate in the nineteenth century. See Hammond 147–152.



for instance, were each paid just 8d. per day throughout the second half of the sixteenth century (Jenkinson 45–46). For a person with similar earnings, more than four days' wages might be required for entry to a single part of the Tower, to say nothing of the other buildings a visitor might wish to see. The Tower was open to the public for tours, yes, but only to those able to pay for the privilege.

When foreign dignitaries or envoys landed at Tower Wharf or came to the city, their visits were part of carefully choreographed early modern statecraft. Key state officials took pains to ensure that English power and wealth were highlighted, but other, less grand features of the running of England were not part of the tours. In Henry VIII's reign, the Privy Council relegated the title of tour guide to no less a man than Thomas Cromwell in preparation for the arrival of the count Palatine in 1539. Cromwell was to greet the count and "feel whether you can grope out of him wherefore he is come" (*Letters and Papers* 53). After, Cromwell had instructions to "show him the Tower and ordnance, if you think it advisable" (*Letters and Papers* 53; Borg, "The Museum" 69). More than 60 years later, the longstanding nucleus of state power and influence Robert Cecil ordered the Lieutenant of the Tower to allow the associates of the Spanish ambassador to "see those thinges in the Tower w[hi]ch all strangers are curious to see," in order "that they may have cause to speake [...] of the place her[e]after" (Cecil).<sup>8</sup> Hospitality did not extend to carte blanche access, though. "My meaning," Cecil clarified, "is th[a]t they shold see those things w[hi]ch the French and others do and not otherwise" (Cecil). These visits clearly had an element of propaganda, but they were also organised to avoid revealing state secrets (Deiter 53, 56–58).

### 3. Encountering the Tower as Prison and Torture Site

The limits occasionally placed on foreigners' tours make Platter's 1599 visit all the more extraordinary. Though sixteenth-century visitors were not shielded from engagement with the Tower's role as a prison, Platter's access was unprecedented. In addition to seeing the standard attractions, Platter claimed, "Von demselbigen kamen wier in die garden kammer, im keller sahen wier die seiler wie man die übelthater strecket" (Platter [1604/1605] 678r; [1968] ii.786). Williams, the twentieth-century editor and translator of Platter's account of England, translated this as, "in the

<sup>8</sup> A tear obscures the word(s) following "speake."

dungeon we saw the ropes used to rack malefactors” (*Thomas Platter’s Travels* 161). In an earlier translation these were the ropes “used to hang the malefactors” (ffoulkes i.66). Both indicate carceral violence while leaving room to wonder what Platter was describing—a pile of ropes or a torture chamber. It is tempting to follow Williams in associating the ropes described with the rack, which was used to extend and stretch the arms and legs of the victim away from the torso, and was the most famous instrument of torture associated with the Tower. “Strecket,” however, is too ambiguous for us to be certain of its meaning. If Williams’ translation jumps to conclusions about the exact torture device associated with these ropes, the other translation is too imprecise to capture the sense of torture or the more literal definition of physically stretching or extending of (in this case) bodies that “strecket” invokes. Instead, this passage may refer to a form of torture that did not require a tool of the size or mechanics of a rack—something like a strappado or the manacles, instruments that suspended their victims in the air and might conceivably have been made of rope.

Though it remains unclear exactly what Platter viewed, his account’s description of viewing materials associated with torture is unusual since the tour occurred in the period in which the Tower’s rack and other torture instruments were still in use intermittently. There is evidence of torture in the Tower until at least the middle of the seventeenth century, though the Tower’s associations with torture have often been exaggerated. It might be one thing to see relics of a time long past or objects of violence associated with the spoils of war like those linked (almost certainly apocryphally) to the defeat of the Spanish Armada.<sup>9</sup> It was another to see tools of violence that were actively, if infrequently, still in use.

Studied on its own, Platter’s visit seems unremarkable. In this context of various Swiss and other continental visitors, however, it becomes clear that it may be unique. It is not altogether clear why Platter had access that others did not. On one hand, his account, like others, seemed to “borrow” from other sources, so there may be some reason to doubt the veracity of his descriptions (*Thomas Platter’s Travels* 136–140; Robson-Scott, *German Travellers* 70–71; Deiter 57). On the other, Platter’s is, to my knowledge, the only early modern account of a visitor seeing an area in the Tower in which prisoners may have been tortured. It is true that Platter was well connected, but plenty of continental visitors to London had let-

<sup>9</sup> On this debate, see Borg, *Heads & Horses* 333–337; Borg “The Museum”, 71; Dillon 248–249; ffoulkes i.7, 29, 31; Hewitt 19–20, 23–30; Hammond 146; Parnell 46.



ters of introduction and powerful connections.<sup>10</sup> Status alone fails to explain why he was granted unparalleled access.

Even nearly a century later, no reference to torture chambers appears in descriptions of visits to the Tower or guides to London, though tours had begun to feature other sorts of violence in the Tower more than they had previously. In 1661, the Dutch visitor William Schellinks saw an iron torture collar, probably one of the items listed in contemporary inventories as having been part of the plunder of the Spanish Armada (*Journal* 50). This, Schellinks claimed, was an item used “at the time of the religious persecution of the Protestants [...] to torture them,” though he made no claims about its use in the Tower or by English officials (*Journal* 50). Other objects had more explicit reputed links to use in the Tower, but these were items associated with execution, not torture. The Basel mathematician Jakob Bernoulli noted in his diary that when touring the Tower in 1682 he had seen the axe purportedly used to execute both Anne Boleyn and the earl of Essex (Bernoulli 80v; “Jacobi Bernoulli” 80v). As one might expect, the truth of the claims about the recycled axe are dubious, not least because Boleyn famously was granted the “privilege” of beheading by sword rather than axe.<sup>11</sup> Muralt, also visiting in the late seventeenth century, noted that “other terrible Things” were features of Tower visits (*Letters Describing the Character* 79). Like Bernoulli, he and Bucher both noticed this axe, but only with reference to Boleyn and not Essex (Muralt, *Letters Describing the Character* 79; [Bucher] 34v). Some later accounts did the opposite.<sup>12</sup> Muralt claimed that this execution axe was available for visitors to hold, foretelling the future of the Tower’s displays (Muralt, *Letters Describing the Character* 79).

Much of the detail of these accounts is standard fare for contemporaries’ visits to the Tower, but some features, including the presentation of the execution axe, alter the timeline of the Tower’s turn to “dark history” considerably. While inventories show that the axe rumoured to be associated with Boleyn’s execution had been in the Tower since the mid seventeenth century, it has sometimes been supposed that it was not on display until the early eighteenth century or later (ffoulkes i.7; Borg, *Heads & Horses* 345). From the early eighteenth century, official and unofficial histories and guidebooks for visits to the Tower began to proliferate

<sup>10</sup> On Platter generally, see *Thomas Platter’s Travels*, chapter six; Larminie, “Platter, Thomas”.

<sup>11</sup> Many have written about Boleyn’s execution. To begin, see Eric Ives, chapter 23.

<sup>12</sup> For example J. Wheeler 19; John Hewitt 110.

(Hammond 144; Melman 128). These often emphasised the Tower's history of incarceration and increasingly included discussions of execution and limited descriptions of torture devices. In the 1830s, though, Tower visitor accounts began to show an increased focus on torture. "Instruments of torture" and execution of questionable authenticity like the axe were on display and eventually available for visitors to play with, to an even greater degree than Muralt had described almost 150 years earlier (Hammond 157–159; Melman 144–145). It is possible that historians have been too quick to blame the Victorians for the rise of interest in gothic history, Tudorism, and "dark" tourism.

Still, in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, discussions of torture were very different and much less trivialised or reframed as "entertainment" than those available at the Tower or Madame Tussaud's in the nineteenth century. Certainly, there were contemporary discussions of the use of torture in the Tower, but these were frequently confined to religious polemic at both ends of the confessional spectrum. Some, like the Spanish Jesuit Pedro de Ribadeneyra, lamented that the Tower had "so many sorts of torture and so many manners and kinds of suffering," including some torture devices that were "so horrible and strange, so excruciating and frightful, that only Satan himself could have invented them and inspired the heretics, his ministers" (501). For the most part, however, depictions of the Tower were largely neutral. Despite the influence of Elizabethan Catholic texts denouncing the Tower's use as an instrument of English religious persecution, no matter how widely these texts were read or shared across Europe, they appealed only to a subsection of the population.<sup>13</sup>

In the early modern period, the use of torture in the Tower was not a feature that yeoman warders or the crown sought to emphasise. If anything, government officials tended to prevaricate about the use of torture and defended the limited circumstances in which it was used. Although a "Spanish Coller for torture" of questionable provenance was listed in Tower inventories from at least the second half of the seventeenth century, items like these were not necessarily yet on view (Borg, *Heads & Horses* 335, 342; ffoulkes i.7; Hewitt 23–24; W. 347; Dillon 248–249, 275). In fact, after Platter's visit, the next clear instance of torture devices that may have been used in the Tower being shown to visitors is from early in the eighteenth century, when a 1708 survey of London listed a rack as being on view in the "Grand Store-House" ([Hatton] ii.636; ffoulkes i.7–8; Par-

<sup>13</sup> For more on this point, see Catherine Jenkinson, chapter five.

nell 51). It is possible that this rack may have been on display in some form since the late seventeenth century, as ffoulkes suggested, but even after it appeared in this survey, guidebooks and visitors' accounts only occasionally listed a rack until the middle of the nineteenth century (ffoulkes i.8).

#### 4. Open Access?

The early modern accounts of Swiss visitors are particularly important not merely because they reveal something about individuals' interactions with the Tower or present a case study through which to consider early modern tourism and continental perception of the Tower. They also fundamentally influence the history of the Tower of London as a museum and visitor attraction. Unlike the ambassadors for whom members of the Privy Council gave strict instructions about access to and presentation of the Tower, most Swiss visitors came only in an unofficial capacity. A fifteenth-century German account noted that England's treasure "is guarded carefully and no-one is allowed to see it but strangers from foreign countries, for it is thought right to show it to them" (*Travels of Leo* 52–53). That view held true into the early modern period and beyond. A 1578 description of London emphasised that the Tower's "multitude of singular and exquisite things" were "seen only by a few strangers, such as ambassadors, and other great Lords that it pleases the king to delight by showing them these antiquities" ([Grenade] 87). Yet in reality, the Tower was open to a wider range of visitors than this description allows. Still, tours of the Tower had a sort of propagandic function, even on a limited scale (Parnell 46). In thinking about access granted to Swiss visitors, one might even be so bold as to suggest cautiously that Swiss visitors like Platter were granted so much access precisely because of the place from which they were visiting. Most Swiss accounts are by visitors from Protestant cantons or cities. By the later decades of the sixteenth century, the English religious settlement meant that the confessional attachments of these visitors made them more welcome than their Catholic counterparts. Unlike travellers from other parts of the British Isles or the Continent, Swiss visitors, because of the unique configuration of Swiss cantonal government, were not emblematic of English foreign rivalries and concerns about state security. Their visits therefore required less caution or strategic planning.

Swiss visitors to London came to the Tower because that is what foreign visitors did and still do. On the other hand, perhaps the Tower

sparked a special interest in Swiss visitors as a physical symbol of English identity and statecraft that had no counterpart in Switzerland, although in other parts of Europe comparable sites might include Antwerp's Citadel, Paris' Bastille, Florence's Fortezza da Basso, and so on, even if those sites were publicly reviled in a way that the Tower was not.<sup>14</sup> Not only does Platter's view of a torture chamber move the history of torture displays for visitors back by around 200 years, but the fact that it seems to be the only account of its kind also suggests that tours of the Tower were individualised beyond the size of fees visitors paid. It remains unclear how Platter managed to arrange this behind-the-scenes tour. Then again, Platter had grown up with the legacy of a father who had spent time as a rope maker, so it is at least possible that his association with both medicine and ropes proved to be useful in securing access to examine this device or its accoutrements and how it might affect the body (Ladurie 35, 142).<sup>15</sup>

The experience of visitors to the Tower could vary from visitor to visitor, seemingly depending on what the warder guide was willing to show. It is precisely that flexibility that is so astonishing. These accounts of early modern Swiss visitors reveal the extent to which the Tower was accessible to the public even as it remained the most important landmark of the English state and headquarters of its most central operations. The Tower was the site at which a number of key crown offices and officials converged, including in centralised state investigations that sometimes resorted to torture. As outsiders able to gain insider access, Swiss visitors like Thomas Platter had a front row seat to observe the inner workings of English statecraft.

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<sup>14</sup> See Jenkinson, chapter ten.

<sup>15</sup> My doctoral supervisor, Professor Steven Gunn, first made this association between Platter's family background and his Tower tour.



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