

spectator's gaze in act 2 of his version, she does not fully address the question of his ambition as a writer. One wonders whether his *Hippolyte* was conceived mainly as an exercise in translation, rhetoric, and poetry, or as a play to be staged and watched.

This critical edition will allow readers to rediscover an important link in the history of French translations and imitations of Seneca's *Phaedra* that culminated with Racine's famous 1677 tragedy. Lamy-Houdry must be commended for her excellent work of annotation and presentation of Yeuwain's text. Her notes on the historical and mythological allusions in the play are substantial and enlightening; she also provides a useful glossary and a list of all deviations from the source text in this book that will interest all those involved with studies in early modern translation, poetry, theater, and the history of humanism.

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Averrunçi, or The Skowrers: Ponderous and New Considerations upon the First Six Books of the "Annals" of Cornelius Tacitus Concerning Tiberius Caesar (Genoa, Biblioteca Durazzo, MS. A IV 5). Edmund Bolton.

Ed. Patricia J. Osmond and Robert W. Ulery Jr. *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* 508; *Renaissance English Text Society* 38. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2017. xvi + 266 pp. \$80.

Patricia Osmond and Robert Ulery have produced an exceptionally fine edition of an exceptional book, the unique manuscript of *Averrunçi, or The Skowrers*, by the Jacobean-Caroline Catholic monarchy-enthusiast Edmund Bolton. Bolton is a writer of little consequence in himself, interesting mostly as a particularly emphatic representative of a camp—in his case, that of recusant Royalist intellectuals. Of his works circulating in print during his lifetime, the most interesting is probably *Nero Caesar*, in that it shows the extremes to which a person with his views could go to curry favor, arguing that not even Nero's reign discredited monarchy. If anything, *The Skowrers*, which must have had scant readership and influence (63), is even more extreme, seeking to rehabilitate the reputation of no less a figure than the nearly universally despised emperor Tiberius, by means of correcting the errors and, more importantly, by exposing the bias in no less a figure than the enormously respected Tacitus—to "scour" the image of Tiberius by rubbing away the grime thrown on it by the annalist. The ultimate motivation for such a contrarian project isn't hard for the editors to guess: "By 'skowring' Tacitus's account of Tiberius [Bolton] might not only restore the honor of monarchy as an institution but remove some of the stains that had marred the good name of the Stuarts in particular" (28). Trying to slog through Bolton's periphrastic prose, one finds oneself welcoming the silliest excuses for Tiberian tyranny—in any older, weary man of a Saturnian disposition, would not the be-

trayal of a “bosome-freind,” as Sejanus was, provoke “mutations” (95)?—simply for the diversion.

But if we wish Osmond and Ulery had lavished their scholarly attentions on something other than this perverse, tedious, sycophantic, and justifiably ignored work, the volume is decidedly worthwhile because of their efforts, especially in the introduction, which breaks down, authoritatively, lucidly, and learnedly, nearly every major issue in the history of historiography raised, or even implied, by Bolton’s screed. Though they duly consult and cite the experts on the specific topics, and though their remarks, of course, revolve around Bolton, Osmond and Ulery provide a superb, fresh rendering of the intellectual context and its problems. Of these, the imperative one, their treatment of which measures their overall success, is the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century controversy over Tacitism and “politic history.” Osmond and Ulery are thoroughly successful here, with good economy and organization laying out the strands of how Tacitus was received and deployed. By the introduction much more is covered, however, and covered effectively: the trend, of which Bolton himself was a part with *Hypercritica*, toward historiographical theory (35–38); the political questioning elicited by Roman precedent, such as with republicanism and the *lex maiestatis* (48–58); and the rich back-and-forth of history versus poetry, and the effort to address Sir Philip Sidney’s contention that history was unequal to the task of exemplarity, unless poetry be injected (36, 59–60). On this last point, the editors are able to make Bolton’s mindset particularly instructive. In describing Bolton’s assumption—or attempt to assume—that the demands of truth, patriotism, and reverence could be harmonized, Osmond and Ulery formulate a tension at the heart of the Renaissance historical imagination: “On the one hand, he appealed to high standards of research and reporting, summed up in the *normae polybiana*. . . . On the other hand, he was reluctant to dismiss entirely the stories of British antiquity and believed, like many of his classical and humanist predecessors, that history should provide examples and precepts of noble conduct” (59–60). Bolton thus becomes a case study in a still-pervasive historical idealism; he insisted that objectivity went along with moral edification and with loyalty to the sovereign, and “he would not have seen these purposes as incompatible” (60). Though his ideological values were extreme, then, in struggling with the Sidneian dichotomy between history and poetry, the latter alone being capable of didacticism, he was typical of his time.

The editors’ presentation of the text of *The Skowrers* seems painstakingly careful, and the explanatory notes are extensive and judicious. But the real achievement lies in the introduction, which marks a significant contribution in the history of historiography.

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