ship between pastoral theatre and baroque pastoral painting. Sigu maintains that the pastoral genre was at first identified by a plain style, but pastoral theatre and art became more complex and enjoyable as their simplicity was highlighted by self-conscious and artistically elaborate ideas and images.

The Theatrical Baroque is a visually appealing and instructive book. It is not a comprehensive treatment of the exhibition at the Smart Museum, but the result of an interdisciplinary scholarly project that promises to be very useful to art and theatre historians as well as to cultural critics.

Juliet Fleming. *Graffiti and the Writing Arts of Early Modern England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001. vi + 224 pp. + 33 illus. $35.00. Review by THOMAS H. LUXON, DARTMOUTH COLLEGE.

This book recovers for critical attention a range of early modern writing practices hitherto either unknown or under-appreciated: "graffiti, tattooing, and the inscription of verse on implements, clothes and other objects" (9). In the process of such recovery, Juliet Fleming also invites us to consider two bold theses. The first is that early modern readers and writers did not rely as thoroughly as we do on a distinction between meaning and the medium that we regard as its vehicle; nor did they so clearly and persistently privilege meaning over matter. She claims at least some early modern practices as exceptions to "Derrida's rule that the Western philosophical tradition is characterized, from Plato to the present, by its systematic 'disdain of the signifier'" (25). Fleming takes more seriously than most Michel Foucault's description of the pre-Enlightenment episteme as one that regarded writing as primal language rather than simply a means for recording or remembering speech. Foucault's "Renaissance episteme," notes Fleming, "draws presence out of voice and gives it to writing" (27), and regards God's revelation of himself in the world as typically written, not spoken. The writing practices Fleming recovers normally are left out of our Enlightenment-born category of lit-

erature because they fail to survive the abandonment of matter–walls, window, skin, hair knots, clothing, pots–as extraneous to meaning.

Fleming's second bold thesis follows from the first:

> The early modern period had a way of understanding the relation of writing to the mind, and to the world outside it, that was not that of representation or reference. This relation . . . proposes a mode of knowledge that simultaneously thinks through matter and accords it a sensibility of its own . . . it is the product of a way of thinking that held the natural and fabricated world to be structured by a non-propositional intelligence shared with the human mind. (164)

Fleming argues both theses successfully and uses them to produce wonderful readings of wall-writing both at home and in church, impresas and sentences written on clothes and jewelry. The sense of a sentence cannot be gathered independent of where it is written, and how. Over the mantel, in the abbey close, on the cathedral wall, upon a knife, or within the circumference of a ring, all these places and materials mean differently, and Fleming helps one see how. Especially fascinating is her brief consideration of whitewash as an early version of Freud's mystic writing pad (73-74) and the ambivalent uses to which whitewash was put by religious reformers (76-78).

Fleming's discussion of tattoos (chapter three) questions familiar notions of self-expression and, even more interesting, notions about where selves exist. Do tattoos offer a mode of self-expression, writing and drawing on the skin a representation of an individuality residing beneath? Or are selves constituted in large measure on the surface and then projected onto an imagined inwardness? And how did early modern people read tattoos? Fleming reminds us of the important role assigned to tattooed people in the early modern development of a British national consciousness. Tattoos marked the difference between the savage bodies of the new world and the Christian bodies of the old, but they also marked the bodies of those most ancient Britons, the Picts:

"Within the terms of the uneven cultural grammar that is the ground on which the early modern antiquarians began to work out a discourse of British national sentiment, the tattooed ancestor stands for a barbarian past that is at once acknowledged and disavowed" (106). The British self comes to be imagined not just in opposition to the practices and bodies of those in other times and other places, but also in this "avowal-that-is-not-one" implicit in Camden's term for Pictish tattoos–the "Britannorum stigmata" (106).

Fleming's careful book winds up with a Lacanian reading of early modern pots, those material forms that probably best illustrate the emergence of media as vessels even as they anxiously recall and punningly evoke earlier notions of "speaking crockery" and "the most common metaphor for mortality," the consanguinity of flesh and clay (151). She suggests, with a •i•ekian twist, that we can also read such pots and mugs as emblematic of an emergent anxiety over modern subjectivity: "The pot is the first object organized around emptiness, and it thus represents the creation of a void in the real on which representation is predicated" (163).

Fleming's second thesis, that the signifier "operated in the period as an image that neither imitated the world, nor expressed the mind, but was at one and the same time both part of the sensible world, and a mode of displaying the perceptual and intellectual complexities of man's lived engagement with that world" (132), might be regarded as the latest contribution to a discussion that began with Coleridge and romantic theories of representation. I'm not convinced that she brings that discussion to a close, nor that she has rid the discussion of the nostalgia and mysticism that has always characterized romantic reflections upon the Renaissance. But she has produced a book that brings new theory, new readings, and new analytical rigor to such discussions.