away Greg's provisionality, however, and corralled the "bad quartos" into an artificially homogeneous group.

Maguire's revisionary work successfully proves there is only one universal amongst these texts: that each is a law unto itself, even though each one does not necessarily demand unique rules to be explained. In the end she does not quite dismiss the idea of memorial reconstruction, but narrows it to a probability in only a few cases. Her timely book provides a fresh point of departure from which textual scholars will test and re-evaluate received claims about these texts and their relationship to Shakespeare's Folio plays.

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Philip Beitchman. *Alchemy of the Word: Cabala of the Renaissance*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998. Pp. xiv, 364.

All published occult texts are paradoxical, in that they expose to vulgar eyes secrets understood only by initiates. The Cabala, here identified mainly with the late thirteenth-century Zohar (Book of Splendour), epitomizes this contradiction by purporting to represent the oral instruction that God vouchsafed to Moses as a supplement to the inscribed decalogue. (One meaning of *cabal* in Hebrew is "that which is not, cannot be written down" [p. 19].) Far from being a direct revelation, however, the Zohar is actually a commentary on the Torah (or Pentateuch) whose textual fluidity and indeterminacy can only invite further speculation: while it explicates enigmas (especially those confronting theodicy) in the canonical text, its own style is so enigmatic that any "secret revealed is immediately reconstituted as another order of mystery" (p. 63). It is this "contemporary" aspect of Cabala that most fascinates Philip Beitchman. For him, the Zohar, whose "floating . . . signifiers" (p. 116) provoke "wonder, imagination, curiosity, and insecurity about its own status as a text" (p. 31), is "a consummately Renaissance problematization of writer, reader, and work, which anticipates, prepares, and probably helped to create contemporary critical attitudes and ambivalences as well as modern textual strategies and deconstructions" (p. 7).

Beitchman's four long chapters imply a straightforward organization: "In the Beginning" (origins and early traditions of Jewish Cabala); "The Secret of Agrippa" (Christian Cabala in the Renaissance); an annotated "Bibliographica Kabbalistica" of mainly continental works; and "Cabala in England, 1497–1700." But this is neither a linear history, nor a conventional bibliographical tool, nor a traditional scholarly synthesis. Rather, by honouring the dialogic style and inherently provisional meanings of the Zohar, Beitchman renders *Alchemy of the Word* itself a "cabalistic" text, in that its mode and aims are ultimately speculative. This is "a study of the *impact and implications*, immediate and long range of the Cabala

of the Renaissance” (p. ix; emphasis added). Hence Joyce, Kafka, Derrida, Eco, Bloom and Blanchot (among others) rub shoulders throughout with Pico della Mirandola, Ficino, Reuchlin, John Dee, Robert Fludd, Thomas Vaughan, *et al.* In the chapter nominally devoted to Agrippa and Christian Cabala, a sub-section on “Cabala between Freud and Jung” interposes, and the “critical annotations” in the “Bibliographica Kabbalistica” typically become free-standing speculations unrelated to the text at hand: *e.g.*, the title alone of Tommaso Garzoni’s *Universal Fortress* (1585) is the point of departure for a six-page excursus on “Saint Teresa’s Castle and Kafka’s” (pp. 159–64).

Most of the historical material here, as the author acknowledges, is based on standard sources: Gershom Scholem for the Jewish Cabala; Joseph Blau and François Secret for Christian Cabala; and (somewhat dubiously) Arthur Edward Waite and Frances Yates for a “demiurgic Neopagan Cabala.” Nor has Beitchman read most of the eighty-odd books in his Renaissance cabalistic bibliography, relying instead on the summaries in Waite, Scholem, Thorndike’s *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* and others, and preferring to be “tempt[ed] to conjecture” (p. 146) about “long range implications.”

Various methodologies lie behind this madness. On the one hand, Beitchman adopts “the lens of poststructuralist theory” to perform “an experiment in new historicism.” Oddly, though, he identifies the latter with Christopher Hill and Raymond Williams (pp. 230–31, where he actually cites a 1962 study by George Williams, Raymond never appearing), and (as well as failing to define or theorize the “new”) he demonstrates kinship with neither the British cultural materialists nor the North American exponents of new historicism (Greenblatt *et al.*). On the other hand, he rejects, along with the “traditional author-focused approach,” the “current text- and discourse-centered one” (p. 57), in favour of a “rhizomatous, ‘nomadillogical’” model as found in Deleuze and Guattari’s *1,000 Plateaus*. Here lies Beitchman’s heart:

A rhizome, or rootstalk/rootstock, is a more subtle and invisible entity than the plant or tree above it, tending more indefinitely toward horizontal proliferation rather than a marked and marking verticality. Texts-as-rhizomes eschew, accordingly, privilege, hierarchy, credit, and visibility of point and situation, existing namelessly as lines, vectors, and speeds. Nor does a rhizome deign to present or represent a world, which trees and plants have always done; nor does it mean, symbolize, or signify, but rather underlies, accompanies, and parallels events, in the sense of being merely another level in a world made only of levels, or one in a thousand “plateaus.” (p. 58)

At its best, Beitchman’s rhizomic reading can suggest interesting avenues for further thought, such as the demonstrated links between Cabala and Renaissance alchemy and medicine, or the plausible relationship between cabalistic study and the diaspora, or the possible connection between an “oppositional” mysticism

within the Society of Jesus and the interest of certain Jesuits in the Cabala, or the conjectured influence of Cabala on Zionist politics.

At its worst, however, such an approach becomes root-bound, repetitious and — especially when applied to literature — unhelpful. For if rhizomic texts do not “deign to present or represent a world,” that is precisely what Renaissance imaginative writing does so powerfully. Here, complex verbal worlds are cut down to their invisible roots, so that, for example, Agrippa is “the model for Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*” (p. 89); Cabala is “pervasive” in Shakespeare, where (among other things) “Prospero represents the ultimate triumph and redemption of John Dee” (pp. 212, 245). Spenser’s “two heroines, Una and Duessa, truth and falsehood, [are] accorded, respectively, Books One and Two of *The Faerie Queene*” (p. 219), to which “a magical, numerological-Pythagorean Cabala that Spenser had absorbed from Dee was structurally essential” (p. 244), and in which Redcrosse Knight’s dream is “borrow[ed], more or less directly, from *The Zohar*” (p. 259). Christ’s chariot (or “getaway car”) in *Paradise Lost* comes from “Cabala or an allied tradition, that of Hebrew-Gnostic ‘merkabah mysticism,’” while “reflections” of a certain cabalistic theodicy “likely contributed to the complexity of the titanic figure of Satan . . . as well as to the credibility of the adjustment that Adam and Eve, and even Milton’s Jesus, are able to make to an imperfect world” (p. 259). Sir Thomas Browne’s famous passage on the “true Amphibium” illustrates “the way Cabala works to substantiate a conception for which sheer scripture is insufficient” (pp. 255–56). And so on.

While the “roots” of these recognizable (if at times even further simplified) interpretations (Yates, Fowler, Saurat, among others) are acknowledged in the notes, Beitchman does little more than restate them; nor does he cite more balanced studies along these lines (e.g., Michael Keefer’s 1991 edition of *Doctor Faustus*), or indeed some of the more recent historical studies of his key figures, such as the many works of Allen G. Debus on the English Paracelsians, William H. Huffman on Robert Fludd, Lotte Mulligan on the Henry More-Thomas Vaughan controversy (in Brian Vickers’ *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance* [1984]), the 1984 scholarly edition of Vaughan by Alan Rudrum, or Keefer on Agrippa in *Renaissance Quarterly* (1988).

The charge of reductionism may seem unfair in light of Beitchman’s acknowledgment of “the *partial way*” he treats these “‘mystic heroes’ of Cabala” and his anticipation of being called “simplistic and distorting” in viewing, e.g., the “multidimensional” John Dee only in “the role of Magus” (p. xiii). Yet the author’s apology does not extend to literary interpretation and consists only in pointing out that scholarly fashions change with the times: Frances Yates and her followers, in rescuing Dee from “a reputation of charlatan-obscurantist” by emphasizing “the importance of Hermeticism, Alchemy, and Cabala” for him and the Renaissance, provided “a rewriting of history that was tonic and exciting for our idealist-mystical, radical, and psychedelic 1960s and 1970s,” while the recent revaluations by

Nicholas Clulee and William H. Sherman are seen as filling a need, “in our hard-headed, economic 1990s,” for a “more practical Dee.” Ultimately everything, like the Zohar itself, is relative: “Dee, Pico, Agrippa, and other mercurial cabalists-and-much-else, were always, anyway, what one wanted them to be” (p. xiv). (Compare, among other statements, that on pp. 44–45: “Cabala is very much what is made of it.”) It is one thing to acknowledge contingency and to historicize, as best we can, our own scholarly judgements; it is another merely to assert a personal preference (by temperament, Beitchman is clearly on the side of the “radical” sixties and seventies).

The book’s general position — that Cabala was more widely known in the Renaissance than Joseph Blau had thought in 1944 — may be taken as proven by the many post-Blau studies cited here. Its more far-reaching thesis — that Cabala’s “mission” was “to help the ‘truths’ of religion survive the challenges of a dawning secular and material age,” and that it was a “bold and original reading and rendition of scripture, custom, and tradition, one that allowed people more room in adjusting to what was happening to them, while contributing to their sense that nothing essential was being lost or forgotten” (p. ix) — remains to be demonstrated.

Despite its speculative mode and its rhizomic preoccupations, however, this erudite volume will be welcome to those who, like myself, need a guide to (if not through) the Renaissance Cabala. It is not user-friendly in structure or style, nor will its literary interpretations satisfy. But it does bring together much earlier work and provide a starting place for a foray into this interesting and often important quarter of the unknowable.

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Hilary Gatti. *Giordano Bruno and Renaissance Science*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999. Pp. x, 257.

Regarding the great and vexed question of the relationship between science and magic in the Renaissance, Brian Vickers has remarked, “who could ever hold the whole of such a vast field in his head?” (Introduction, *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, ed. Brian Vickers [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press], p. 2), and the same question could very well be asked of the figure of Giordano Bruno, whose thought seems to touch on every aspect of this enormously complicated subject. In *Giordano Bruno and Renaissance Science*, Hilary Gatti continues and develops an approach that she began in her earlier work, *The Renaissance Drama of Knowledge: Giordano Bruno in England* (1989), where she had asserted that the Yatesian thesis of Bruno as Renaissance magus “was pushed too far” (p. 49). At the beginning of her latest study, Gatti suggests that Bruno’s concern with occultism and magic should be seen as complementing his concern