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

with the new science, “particularly now that so many scientists of the early modern period, up to and including Newton, are known to have read extensively in such subjects and to have considered them integral parts of their culture” (p. ix). What emerges most clearly from this book, however, is that Bruno deserves far more credit as a serious scientific thinker than he has previously been accorded, although such a judgement itself may partly rest on our own ideological bias at this moment in history.

Instead of concluding from the various differences between Bruno’s philosophy and early modern science that “his thought about the natural universe was antiquated and irrelevant to the modern world,” Gatti argues that it may be more accurate to see Bruno “as putting forward an idea of the universe and of the impossibility of the human mind’s capability of reaching exact and final knowledge of its workings, which anticipates many ideas familiar to our post-Einsteinian era, dominated by the approximations of relativity theory and quantum mechanics” (p. 6). In other words, Bruno was not a little behind his time, but well ahead of it, and thus Gatti’s study offers another fascinating example of the curious cultural parallels between the early modern and postmodern worlds, parallels which are emerging with increasing frequency in Renaissance studies.

Gatti’s reading of Bruno as one of the earliest philosophers of the new science, rather than as a kind of Hermetic demigod, is largely convincing; it is certainly no longer possible after reading this study to accept Yates’s “celebrated conclusion that Bruno’s Copernicanism should not be seen in the context of the history of astronomy but rather as ‘a hieroglyph, a Hermetic seal hiding potent divine mysteries’” (p. 17). Nevertheless, at times Gatti seems to remove Bruno too far from the magical context which she promises to contextualize in her opening remarks. If Bruno sets himself up as “the captain who can make sense of the information given to him by the rustic observers . . . the blind Tiresius who can divine the true message behind the signs communicated to him by those who see” (p. 51), then surely it is impossible for us to lose sight of, or ignore entirely, the idea of Bruno the Magus, involving all those blurred but fascinating categories of Renaissance psychology, theology, and magic with which he has been associated. Bruno after all considers himself to be exercising a prophetic insight that interprets nature on a higher level than is accessible to mere observers of physical and mathematical quantities.

The one mention of Bruno’s *De vinculis in genere*, which “represents a remarkable attempt to demonstrate the ways in which language in all its forms acts on human behavior, influencing and even enslaving the will” (p. 3), curiously commends that work as one of his most original contributions to the development of the new science, whereas Ioan Couliano has seen it (albeit somewhat controversially) as establishing “magic as general psychosociology” (*Eros and Magic in the Renaissance* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987], p. 102). Gatti’s frequent admission that Bruno consistently maintained a biological-animistic

approach to cosmological questions would seem to retain his “scientific” thought within the compass of speculation about “magical” (even erotic) attractions between planets and other bodies. Somewhat dubious as well is Gatti’s suggestion that the second trilogy of Italian dialogues published in England, ending with the *Heroic Frenzy*, actually offers ideas and attitudes that pre-date the first trilogy, beginning with the *Ash Wednesday Supper*, so that the final trilogy offers only the story of Bruno’s Hermetic Neoplatonic intellectual past. Even if this is true, the later Italian dialogues still likely influenced Elizabethan writers along the Hermetic Neoplatonic lines that Bruno supposedly refuted.

Nevertheless, Gatti’s argument concerning Bruno’s preference for a Pythagorean immanence over a Platonic transcendence is fascinating in its implications. Since all creation partakes of the infinite, there is “an end to the hierarchy of being” (p. 112), and Bruno presents the endeavours of the inquiring mind “as a penetration *into* the essential meaning of the infinite ocean of being” (p. 190), rather than as an ascent. Such a description of the scientific process may raise troubling questions about attitudes towards nature and gender in “inquiring minds” active in other disciplines. Gatti concludes her discussion of *De immenso* with a passage which constructs Bruno as a new scientist who has cast off the shackles of mystical frenzies, who no longer attempts to merge himself with the object of his contemplation:

The age of Narcissus is over, and the decadent courts of the renaissance, with their eunuch voices, have had their day. The new piper, classless and pragmatic, will advance in the footprints left long ago by Pan . . . in an attempt to clutch and possess the order (the nymphs) he has just glimpsed in those fragmentary notes. Today some might be tempted to see this moment as a rape; and Bruno explicitly uses the language of gender to close his work. (p. 213)

While Gatti shies away from developing the implications of these remarks, it is likely that future explorers of Bruno’s thought will find this nexus of ideas a rich area of investigation.

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Emmanuel Faye. *Philosophie et perfection de l’homme: de la Renaissance à Descartes*. Paris, Vrin, 1998. Pp. 397.

Peut-on être à la fois théologien et philosophe? Voilà la grande question que pose ce livre qui voit le jour dans la collection “Philologie et Mercure,” sous la direction de Pierre Magnard et s’encadre donc dans la tradition de l’humanisme latin. Cela n’est pas sans importance: les acteurs dans cette histoire sont des écrivains dont certains sont bien connus et d’autres mal connus ou méconnus, mais tous héritiers