Richard Zimler
The Last Kabbalist of Lisbon
Arcadia
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By Richard Crowhurst

The murder of a respected Jewish kabbalist leads to a crisis of belief for his nephew, Berekiah Zarco, as he investigates the death. The streets of Lisbon flow with blood as Jewish traditions and lives are destroyed by Christian fervour. Richard Zimler’s 16th century novel has drawn many comparisons with the multi-layered work of Umberto Eco. While the subject and historical setting invite such comparisons, The Last Kabbalist lacks the complexity of Eco’s work. This is not necessarily a bad thing and ensures that this historical murder mystery appeals to fans of the historical whodunnit, as well as those after more literary fare. Although the tease of ‘discovering’ an old manuscript has been well worn, don’t let this put you off as the novel’s pacing and plot more than compensate. If you like your thrillers with a dollop of occult symbolism or historical illumination, then you’re sure to enjoy this.