A few years before her death, Frances Yates began her lecture to a meeting of the Society for Renaissance Studies with the emotional announcement that knowledge of the Neo-Platonic and Hermetic traditions had been suppressed. While some took her seriously, I was sceptical. Yet there is textual evidence that she was not wrong after all. The suppression began almost immediately among those opposed to the concordism¹ of Ficino or Pico, but in this essay I will focus on reactions to this tradition in the second half of the sixteenth century.

In 1586, in the ‘Praefatio’ to the first volume of his Commentariorum [...] et Disputationum in Genesim,² Benedictus Pererius reveals that he asked the publisher of the commentary on Genesis by Cardinal Cajetano (1468–1534)³ why the good Cardinal had not mentioned Pico della

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¹ Concordism is used by classical historians of philosophy for Neo-Platonic attempts to unify Greek philosophy. Initially the term ‘syncretist’ was coined by the theologian George Calixtin, who tried to unify heterodox Christian and orthodox Catholic theology. For him it is a positive word. Later German Protestants towards the end of the seventeenth century used the term to identify both ancient Neo-Platonist and sixteenth- and seventeenth-century philosophers who maintained there was agreement among philosophers: it is here a term of opprobrium. I will use the term concordist for ancient philosophers and syncretist only when used by those attacking this Neo-Platonic tradition in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.
² Edition used: Benedictus Pererius, Commentariorum [...] et Disputationum in Genesim (Cologne, 1601), p. 24 ff. Benedictus Pererius was born in Valencia, entering the Society of Jesus in 1552, and going immediately to Rome, where he studied 1553–56 at the Collegio Romano. He was first a professor of litterae humaniores in 1556–58; of philosophy 1558–67, and theology 1567–1610. See ‘Benedictus Pererius’, in Charles H. Lohr, Latin Aristotle Commentaries, 5 vols. to date (Florence: Olschki, 1988), vol. 2, pp. 131–320. Few philosophy texts by Jesuits were published; of his 34 texts only four were printed.
³ Thomas de Vio, Cardinal Cajetano, Commentariorum illustres planeque insignes in quinque Mosaicos libros, annotationibus, F. Antonio Fonseca (Paris, 1539). Fonseca criticized Pico’s Heptaplus in remarks in the margins. Pererius’s own anti-Platonic commentary on Genesis was very popular, last reprinted in Germany, by Agrippinae, Friessem, 1687. It gave a sustained criticism of Steuco’s Cosmopoeia and De perenni
Mirandola’s *Heptaplus* of 1489 in his commentary.\(^4\) He answered Pererius that Cajetano was so shocked that Pico had mixed the Holy Scripture with pagan mythology that he did not want to mention his name in the text.\(^5\) This leads to the question of how many others were reading the *Heptaplus* and other Florentine Neoplatonic texts in Padua in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries without the fact being registered in their publications.

How Platonic texts were read from the fifteenth through to the eighteenth centuries has been the subject of intense study over the last sixty years: building on the ground-breaking work of Paul Oskar Kristeller in the late 1930s and 40s, the scholarly studies and translations of Ficino’s philosophy by Michael Allen and James Hankins, and the translation of the letters of Marsilio Ficino by the Language Department of the School of Economic Science in London, have helped transform Ficino studies from a recondite topic into an indispensable field of research.\(^6\) However there is an additional topic: how and when did

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