



D. P. WALKER

Photo: Ian Bavington Jones

DANIEL PICKERING WALKER

1914-1985

D. P. WALKER, normally known as Perkin, died on Sunday 10 March 1985 after a short illness. His last years were not happy: he had trouble with his back; a hip operation had not been entirely successful; he had all but completed a successful course of treatment for a cancer of the mouth when he died from a burst stomach ulcer. Walker was a great scholar. He was also a surprisingly good teacher: he never made anything easier than it was, but he had a genius for making difficult subjects accessible to undergraduates and challenging to postgraduates. He himself maintained that he never 'taught' anybody anything—merely clearing away obstacles. In the Warburg Institute he found the perfect home for his talents.

He was a Londoner (born 30 June 1914) who also loved his garden in the country (at Sible Hedingham where he grew his roses). His education at Westminster School left a lasting impression on him, giving him an excellent grounding in Latin, French, German, and English. (He already had some Greek, but he perfected it in the 1950s, helped by Elisabeth Rosenbaum to whom he attributed his easy mastering of Renaissance Greek, ligatures and all.) Some of his most valued friendships (with Sir Angus Wilson and Bentley Bridgewater for example) were cemented at Westminster. He went on to take a first in Modern Languages at Oxford (Christ Church, 1935) and completed his D.Phil. there in 1940. He never talked about his time in Oxford except to make it plain that he deeply disliked it. He was a man of punctilious courtesy, always ready to acknowledge his debts to others, but his thesis (on *Vers et musique mesurés* in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries) does not mention his supervisor and contains not even a perfunctory word of thanks for guidance received. It is clear that this was a period of lonely wrestling with the problems of original scholarship; clear also that Walker associated this period with the strains of coming to terms with his homosexuality. He emerged from these trials with that reticent nobility which he kept to the end. His thesis already shows the breadth, depth, and originality of his scholarship. It is moving to read and to handle. In 1940 an Oxford D.Phil. did not necessarily

resemble the immaculately typed tomes we are used to now: his (in four volumes) is typed with two fingers on a variety of typewriters; passages of quotations are stuck in to avoid risk of error in retyping; there are corrections and additions in his own unmistakable hand. In it, we can see Walker at work. The bibliography alone is worth lingering over. As he wrote in his abstract: 'The Bibliography is meant to be complete as far as contemporary sources and *vers et musique mesurés* are concerned.' Only a young scholar with the firmest grasp of his subject would have dared to make such a claim—a claim which has proved justified.

All his life Walker worked from contemporary sources (especially early printed books). What he wrote in his thesis could have been subsequently placed at the head of everything he wrote:

Contemporary sources are quoted as fully as possible, even when it involves repeating their predecessors. No attempts have been made to give aesthetic judgments on the verse and the music, except when their beauty or ugliness explain their history. Most space has been given to technical and historical problems.

Whilst remaining true to those ideals, Walker was one of the most readable of authors and the least obscure of tutors and lecturers.

His thesis (like all his work) resulted in an unsettling of old assumptions based on a mass of new and exciting information. It centred on the Academy of Jean-Antoine de Baïf and includes original insights into Joachim Du Bellay, Ronsard, La Taille, Pontus de Tyard, Theodore Beza, Ramus, Marin Mersenne . . . The unhurried scope of this scholarship in a young man awaiting conscription remains deeply impressive. He acknowledged his debts to Augé-Chiquet (for Baïf) and to P.-M. Masson (for musical humanism), but nothing can hide his originality, his integrity or the authority of his judgements—judgements which are authoritative because he had read all his authors at first hand and had pondered over them. He could show (against current orthodoxy) that the claims of practitioners or theorists such as Joachim Du Bellay, Ronsard, Buttet, or Ramus in no wise weakened Baïf's dominance or originality. Only Pontus de Tyard is singled out for the connections he forged between literary and musical humanism. It would have been so easy to overlook Beza in this context: Walker showed that this Reformer who was also an excellent Latin poet provided 'conclusive contemporary proof of the unsuitability of the French language for quantitative versification'. And he was able to show that the revival of *musique mesurée* in the seventeenth century owed its success not to the later writers of

vers mesurés et rimes but 'almost solely to the beauty of the music itself'.

A thesis can be a tomb. Walker's was not. His early published studies sprouted from it. In his submission for the D.Phil. he included the manuscript of a long 'Essay on Musical Humanism in the 16th and early 17th Centuries' (over ninety pages of foolscap) which appeared in 1941-2, in five instalments, in Vols. II and III of *The Music Review*. He read the proofs when he was a corporal in the Intelligence Corps (1940-3): one of his readers was doing war-time ambulance-work: Frances Yates. Walker continued his war-work in the Foreign Office (1943 until the end of hostilities in Europe). Through Frances Yates—whom he loved and admired (as he admired all those he loved) with a richly constructive admiration, he was introduced to that group of refugees centred in the Warburg Institute who were Hitler's gift to English scholarship. Walker flourished in the company of Gertrud Bing, Otto Kurz, Fritz Saxl, Nicolai Rubinstein and Rudolf Wittkower, whom he helped with *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, as well as with the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*: and, especially, there were Frances Yates and Ernst Gombrich. He was able to profit from the Warburg Institute since Brian Woledge (the Fielden Professor at UCL) not only appointed him in 1945 to an assistant lectureship (seeing that he got a readership in record time in 1958) but gave him three fruitful years' leave as a Senior Research Fellow at the Warburg (1953-6).

In UCL and the Warburg Institute he met students (undergraduates and postgraduates) who became lifelong friends. London gave him contacts with first-class scholars and with relaxation. He was a good tennis player until virtually crippled; to the end he played his music with groups of friends, colleagues, and their wives. Many of Walker's friends remember him as an amateur musician of real quality. He loved Schubert and had a lifelong passion for the *Lieder*, even suggesting that they sustained him in his study of German. He was a delightful pianist and enjoyed playing duets with Ilse Gombrich. He would bring his violin or viola along to the Gombrichs too, often joining in a chamber-music group with them. From his earliest days in UCL he regularly played in a quartet in London: music-making meant more to him than many realized. His playing was all of a piece with his personality: he was faithful to the score and rarely allowed any emotion to show. He could be dead-pan but as an interpreter was always faithful, reliable and deeply understanding.

Even as a young man Walker's scholarly writings were impressive. Every year saw a major article from his pen; in the *Journal of Renaissance and Baroque Music*, in *Musica Disciplina*, in *Musikwissenschaftliche Arbeiten*, in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. With François Lesure of Paris he edited the *Airs* of Claude Le Jeune for the American Institute of Musicology. He also published the music for the Florentine *intermedi* of 1589.

These contributions remain as fresh as when they were written, as can be judged from Penelope Gouk's re-edition of some of Walker's less accessible works in *Music, Spirit and Language in the Renaissance* (Variorum Reprint, London, 1985).

In the 1950s and early 1960s Walker was above all known to musicologists: the majority of Renaissance scholars knew little of him. It was to his students that Walker gave the fruits of his startlingly original humanist scholarship. Long before he published in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* his article on 'Orpheus the Theologian and Renaissance Platonists' (1953) or his book *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (Warburg Institute, 1958)—both of which remain landmarks—he had explained the relevance of such concerns to the study of Rabelais, Ronsard, and Montaigne in some of the most stimulating special-subject courses ever given in London. With the innocence of the young we thought that what he told us was generally known . . .

From the beginning of his career at UCL Walker had turned his attention to several interlocking subjects: to music, magic, religion, medicine, and the role of *Spiritus* in the life of Renaissance man. Virtually single-handed he taught us all to grasp the wider implications of what he named the *Prisca Theologia*, that secondary revelation which a series of misdatings led earlier ages to attribute to Hermes Trismegistus, the contemporary and (for some) the teacher of Moses. And he unravelled the complex confusions which arose when the Platonic *Spiritus* (linking body and soul) became interwoven with Pauline *spiritus* (where the roles of spirit and soul are reversed).

Seemingly inevitably, these interests led Walker to a lasting preoccupation with Renaissance magic, which he saw as one of the most typical creations of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Such concerns deepened his friendship for Frances Yates even before he was elected to the Readership in Renaissance Studies at the Warburg (1961)—which he held until he succeeded to the Chair there in the History of the Classical Tradition (1975), from which he retired in 1981.

But whereas Frances Yates sympathized on the whole with the aspirations of the Renaissance *magus* and entered imaginatively into his world, Walker's concern was at first more detached and, eventually, more critical. In *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* Walker takes his readers dispassionately through the magical concerns—hence the *daemonic* theories and practices—of some of the greatest thinkers of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including Ficino, his pupil Francesco Cattani da Diacceto, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Gemistus Pletho (the Byzantine scholar so influential for the acclimatization of Platonism and Hermeticism in Italy), and Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples. The second part of this elegant and original book, dealing as it does with such names as Henry Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, Francesco di Giorgio, Gian-Francesco Pico, Jean Bodin, Del Rio, Wier, and Francis Bacon, remains quite simply unsurpassed. From it generations of scholars continue to learn about magic, music, *spiritus*, and *daemones* as the Renaissance conceived them: it still enlightens students keen to understand the background of assumptions, beliefs, and convictions against which authors like Erasmus, Marot, Rabelais, Ronsard, Beza, Montaigne, Bacon, Mersenne, and their successors lived, thought, and wrote. For students used to the triviality or obscurity of much of the writing on Marot (say) or the *Pléiade* or Montaigne it was (and is) a tonic to read the pages in which Walker showed how the Orphic hymns and the Sibylline prophecies could be used to supplement (within the Judaeo-Christian tradition) the teachings of St Paul—and even to correct him. Where else could the student of Marot, Ronsard, or Beza come across thoughts such as these? Guy Lefèvre de La Boderie was concerned to counteract 'the paganism of the poetry of Ronsard' and the 'powerful *effects*' of the psalms as translated by Marot and Beza:

The remedy against these disintegrating kinds of music, which produced respectively impiety and heresy, and hence dissension in the State, was to substitute French versions of Catholic liturgical hymns for the psalms of Marot and Bèze (and good Catholic translations of the Psalms) and imitations and paraphrases of the *Orphica* and *Hermetica* for the themes of classical mythology in the poetry of the *Pléiade*.

Writing both so clear and so challenging was almost unbelievably stimulating for those who, up till then, had been exposed to studies where bibliographies gave pride of place to Chamard's *Histoire de la Pléiade*.

It was *Spiritual and Demonic Magic* which gave Walker his first

wide audience among that majority of Renaissance scholars who were not primarily musicologists. Anyone interested in European thought from the Council of Florence to the eighteenth century in England, Italy, and France found matter to reflect on in this book. For to his wide first-hand reading Walker allied an unusual degree of perceptiveness about the implications of what he had studied.

The historical importance of these connexions between magic and religion is, I think, that they led people to ask questions about religious practices and experiences which would not otherwise have occurred to them; and by approaching religious problems through magic, which was at least partially identical with, or exactly analogous to religion, but which could be treated without reverence or devotion, they were sometimes able to suggest answers which, whether true or not, were new and fruitful. *(Spiritual and Demonic Magic, p. 84)*

And for those who still thought that magic was in some ways marginal to political or religious history, Walker showed how close Campanella came to winning over Pope Urban VIII (though not Richelieu) to his plan to transform Catholicism into a world-religion enforced by magic (*ibid.*, p. 236).

Walker's net spread wider in his *Decline of Hell* (1964) which ranged from Origen and the early Fathers to the English Platonists, Pierre Bayle, Malebranche, Leibniz, and the Camisards. This was, he said, his favourite book. Walker, himself so critical of Christianity, found many of his friends and admirers among Christians. (The *Church Times* judged *The Decline of Hell* to be essential reading.) In this book Walker was (as always) striving to understand: here he emerges as a moralist concerned to judge. The first half of this book treats objectively the strengths and weaknesses of the doctrines of Hell, the officially tolerated secrecy and dishonesty practised when expounding them and the 'merciful doctors' who sought to mitigate them or (like Origen) to make Hell eventually lead to a joyful Restoration of All Things. Walker did not thunder of course: as in tutorial and conversation, he let dry wit do its devastating work, as when Leibniz is quoted, without comment, for his remark: 'The damnation of unregenerate infants is not to my taste' (p. 38). But what Walker most disliked in Christianity was summed up in the Doctrine of Hell; he wanted his readers to know that the decline in belief in Eternal Torment is a major revolution in Christian doctrine. Oddly, the Devil's role in Hell was rarely discussed in traditional theodicies and controversies; yet, by divine permission Satan's everlasting Kingdom

was an essential element in the plan by which God's 'justice shall be made manifest for all eternity'.

One of the pleasures of reading *The Decline of Hell* is to be guided to consider a matter of supreme concern to morality by a scholar whose probity was of the essence of his character. Another is the pleasure of meeting all-but-unknown theologians such as Mrs Jane Lead, the Philadelphian, whose *Heavenly Cloud now Breaking* (1681) won her the support of Baron Freiherr von Knyphausen and of two Oxford scholars, Francis Lee and Richard Roach (both of St John's).

About this time Walker set about learning Dutch and then Hebrew (which he managed to read remarkably well).

For many the most important of Walker's books remains *The Ancient Theology* (Duckworth, 1972). Starting with his studies on Orpheus the Theologian, the *Prisca Theologia* in France, and Sidney's *Arcadia*, he extended his interests to Savonarola, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, the French Jesuits in China, and the Chevalier Ramsay. These studies remind us on every page that the ideas which Walker unearthed and expounded were of central importance to major authors. And how impatient he was with Pope's 'famous and fatuous line':

One truth is clear: Whatever is, is RIGHT.

Walker showed that in the great debate on theodicy, Louis Racine, Pascal, Swift, and (later) Voltaire are on one side, William King, Leibniz, and Pope on the other (pp. 251-2).

The *Ancient Theology* reached a world-wide public. The book emphasizes Walker's greatest strength: his ability to see the past undivided by century or discipline. He was a scholar's scholar, always readable, never displaying erudition for its own sake, often modestly suggesting that he was merely a pioneer making a way for others to do better (they seldom did, of course) or merely disentangling a mass of data which others would master. Perhaps some took all this literally. Those who knew him did not. Not that he was affecting modesty: he was modest. But he often over-estimated the intelligence and diligence of others.

Walker's scholarship in many ways mirrored his life. In his last years in the Warburg (where he delighted in his Honorary Fellowship) he remained superficially unchanged—going down to lunch at the same time every day, dining in the same restaurants, valuing the same friends. But he became more deeply taciturn. It was possible to spend several hours in his company without exchanging a word. As a younger man he had been a

happy laughing host, an amusing talker, and a good deflator of pomposity and trendiness. In his later years (except at Sible Hedingham where he enjoyed breaking off gardening to conjure up feasts for his friends) he rarely cooked even for himself. In London he ran his household goods down to the barest minimum. Yet to his friends he remained generous to a fault; he loved company but could not always show that he did so: when he did intervene in discussions (which was rare in his later years) he could be shattering. I remember with awe his sitting in solid silence while a trendy French speaker, hiding behind clouds of unknowing, made light of scholarly efforts to arrive at objective truth: Walker's sole reply was, 'Mais il y a l'intégrité'.

That could serve as his epitaph.

His last book (before Penelope Gouk's important collection of his articles) was *Unclean Spirits: Possession and Exorcism in France and England in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries* (Scolar Press, 1981). It is essentially the text of the Lord Northcliffe Lectures given at UCL in 1979, in a series already graced by his friends Sir Ernst Gombrich, Dame Frances Yates, and Professor Arnaldo Momigliano, Hon.KBE.

I am [he said] taking a step into a largely unexplored field.

And he was. Basing himself on two cases of diabolical possession which had made a great stir, he wrote about Laon in 1566 and Denham in 1585. These cases of possession were far different from cases of witchcraft. They occurred, moreover, after the schisms and Reformations of the sixteenth century and so could be used by one group of Christians against another. When a Huguenot tried to expel him by singing Marot's psalms, Beëlzebub retorted: 'Do you hope to expel me by those jolly little songs which I helped to write?' Ronsard's concern to exorcize his opponents (in the *Response aux Injures*) leads by stages to such horrors as the havoc wrought by the Throckmorton girls, whose devils Pluck, Catch, and Smackes resulted in the hanging of John, Alice, and Agnes Samuel (whose confiscated chattels endowed a Cambridge lecture).

One might have wished that Walker had written on Heaven as well as Hell; on moral saints as well as on dreadful vindictive little vixens. But in his way he did. Walker showed the central importance of Platonic idealism and Christian spirituality within European culture. His studies in so many fields presuppose the reality of the *extasis* of Socrates and of the *raptus* of St Paul (however they are to be explained). But Walker knew in his bones the power of evil and knew that it was never more powerful than when

it masquerades as good and that a lie is never more cogent than when it is sanctioned by Truth.

His influence over his students and colleagues was deep and lasting: disagreements only brought one closer. What he sought was not agreement but scholarship and rectitude.

The widest public recognition never came to him. He did not have a string of honorary degrees; he was never knighted. He valued all the more his election as a Fellow of the Academy in 1974 (even that was late, given his achievements—he was sixty then). Above all he valued his Honorary Fellowship at the Warburg, which was his spiritual home.

M. A. SCREECH