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Barnabe Googe's *Zodiake of Life*: A Translation Reconsidered

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Marcellus Palingenius’ *Zodiacus Vitae* in twelve books (Venice [1535?]) was exceedingly popular in Reformation Europe. In nearly 10,000 lines of Latin hexameters are conteined twelue seuerall labours, painting out moste liuely, the whole compasse of the world, the reformation of manners, the miseries of man­kinde, the pathway to vertue and vice, the eternitie of the Soule, the course of the Heavens, the mys­teries of nature, and dierers other circumstances of great learning, and no lesse judgement,
as Barnabe Googe summarized it on the title page of his translation of 1576.¹ The ZV saw over sixty editions as well as translations into French, German and English,² and it was a schooltext both on the Continent and in England, where it was taught along with Terence and Mantuan in the third form.³ Ten editions of the ZV were printed in England between 1569 and 1639.⁴

Barnabe Googe (1540–1594), a minor poet, published a volume of original verse and several translations. He was among the young men, most of them Protestants, at the inns of court who made the period 1558–1572 the most pro­lific of the century for translation.⁵ The first three books of Googe’s *Zodiake of Life* appeared in 1560, the first six in 1561, and all twelve in 1565. A revised edition with extensive marginal glosses came out in 1576 and was reprinted in 1588.⁶

Since the only other English translation of the ZV, an anonymous prose version ([London] 1896), is extremely scarce, the choice for those who wish to familiarize themselves with the poem is between one of the old Latin editions and Googe. Sixteenth-century Englishmen were more likely to have been
acquainted with the Latin version than Googe’s translation. It is true that the first Latin edition printed in England (1569) postdates Googe’s translation, but copies of the numerous editions from the Continent must have found their way to England before that date.⁷

Most students of Tudor literature meet Palingenius, if they meet him at all, through Googe’s translation. What will they find in Googe? How accurately does he present Palingenius? In what ways does the Zodiake of Life depart from the Zodiacus Vitae? Googe’s contemporaries praised his translation, though only in general terms: Roger Ascham, William Webbe, Francis Meres, and Gabriel Harvey all mentioned it approvingly, if briefly.⁸ In the eighteenth century Thomas Warton wrote: “Googe seems chiefly to have excelled in rendering the descriptive and flowery passages of this moral Zodiac.”⁹ To illustrate Googe’s better work Warton quoted part of the description of spring (opening of Book III) and the description of one of the demon kings (Book IX). The latter passage will be examined below. C. S. Lewis thinks little of the ZV and of Googe’s translation: “The original, a diffuse and tedious satirical-moral diatribe in hexameters, lost little in Googe’s fourteeners. Perhaps it gained.”¹⁰ Rosemond Tuve assesses Googe’s poetical practice as follows:¹¹

His translation is spare; minute compressions of phrase will mount gradually to a saving of a hundred lines in a book. He does not force the opinions of his original by sly choices in the coloring of phrases. He wrenches syntax, he uses rhyme-fillers (though in this he is no egregious sinner). . . . Except perhaps in the very earliest part of the book, he takes care not to miss opportunities for particularity, and slight differences from his original frequently take that direction.

Brooke Peirce accepts without comment Tuve’s judgments.¹² William Sheidley finds that “Googe frequently adds to the concretion and particularity of his original through colloquial diction” and suggests that Googe’s own poetry has greater concision than his contemporaries, a concision which he learned from Palingenius.¹³

By closely comparing two representative passages and summarizing Googe’s practice elsewhere, I will show that Googe does not make the poem more concrete and concise, that he bowdlerizes, and that he eliminates or tries to dilute Catholic elements in the poem. I will also discuss his practice in the context of his own age. The point of this is not to argue that Googe has done a disservice to Palingenius but to show twentieth-century readers how his poem differs from Palingenius’. This is of some importance, for while the influence of Palingenius on Shakespeare has been well examined, his influence on other
English writers, largely unexplored, appears more clearly when one uses the Latin text rather than Googe's.\textsuperscript{14} If Tuve is referred to frequently here it is because her study is the most thorough, though still inadequate. She may have had in mind generalizations about Elizabethan translators such as those of F. O. Matthiessen:\textsuperscript{15}

His diction was racy and vivid. . . . [He enjoyed fullness of expression, the free use of doublets and alliteration, the building up of parallel constructions for the sake of rhythm. . . . Whenever possible he substituted a concrete image for an abstraction, a verb that carried the picture of an action for a general statement.

Tuve's comments on the comparative lengths of the Latin and English versions imply that Googe has improved on the Latin, that he is more economical than his original. It is true that he reduces the number of lines by nearly 9\% (from 9937 to 9103).\textsuperscript{16} But there is another explanation for this reduction. J. P. Postgate, who translated a great deal of Latin verse into English verse, says that the English ten-syllabled line carries nearly the same amount of information as the Latin hexameter.\textsuperscript{17} If Postgate is right, we can expect Googe to use fewer lines than Palingenius simply because he was translating Latin hexameters into English fourteeners. And this is in fact the case, as the following analysis will show. At the same time, however, it must be admitted that if Googe does not "compress" Palingenius, he does not expand as much as Arthur Golding, whose translation of Ovid's \textit{Metamorphoses} (1565–67), also in fourteeners, contains 2500 more lines than the original.\textsuperscript{18}

The passages chosen for analysis should give us a clear picture of Googe's abilities since they are very different: the first is an argument for the existence of angels, the second a description of a demon king, Passage 1 is 29 lines in the \textit{ZV} and 23½ lines in Googe:\textsuperscript{19}

\begin{align*}
\text{Quid demum ratio dictat? viventia multa} & \quad (295) \\
\text{Esse quidem, nostros fugiant quae tenuia sensus.} & \\
\text{Nam nisi fecisset meliora et nobiliora,} & \\
\text{Quam mortale genus, fabricator maximus ille,} & \\
\text{Nempe videretur non magno dignus honore,} & \\
\text{Nempe imperfectum imperium atque ignobile haberet.} & \quad (300) \\
\text{Infra etenim naturam hominis, pecudesque feraeque} & \\
\text{Existunt, viles omnes ac mente carentes,} & \\
\text{Et miserae, et ventri tantum somnoque vacantes.} & \\
\text{Quod si nullum animal melius natura creasset,} & \\
\text{Quidnam aliud foret hic mundus, quam turpe ferarum} & \quad (305)
\end{align*}
Ac pecudum stabulum, spinisque fimoque refertum?
Quidnam aliud foret ipse Deus, quam pastor herusque
Multorumque gregum, multorumque armentorum?
Atqui hominem fecit: nimirum maxima laus haec;
Nimirum satis hoc. Ohe, fieri melius nil
Debuit aut potuit? iamiam perfectior orbis
Esse nequit? fuit haec Iovis infinita potestas?
Sed videamus, utrum sit fas, hoc credere. Non est,
Non est hoc, inquam, fas credere, nec ratio vult.
Nam quid homo est? animal certe stultum atque malignum,
Præque aliis miserum, si se cognoscat ad unguem.
Quis non sponte malus? Vitiorum lubrica et ampla
Est via, qua properant omnes, ultroque feruntur;
Nec prohibere valent monitor, lex, poena, metusve:
Contra virtutis salebrosa, angusta, nimisque
Ardua, qua pauci tendunt, iïdemque coacti.
Quis sapit? an mulier? numquid puer? aut cerdonum
Tota cohors? Eheu stultorum maxima turba est.

But what doth Reason byd me write, that many creatures framed
Aliue there are that we can not by senses understand:
For if that God should not haue made, wyth hye and glorious hand,
More noble creatures than the state of fading mortall kinde:
He had not then deserued such prayse, as is to him assignde,
Unperfect eke had bene his reigne: for underneth the kinde
Of Man, the wilde and sauage Beastes consist of brutish minde,
To sleepe and foode, addicted all. And if he had not framed
No better things than here we see, the worlde might well be named,
A fold of filthy feeding flocks, with thornes and donge set out.
What should we then this God account, a mighty heardman stoute?
But he created man besides, now sure a goodly thing:
Was this his best? is this the power of that Almighty king?
But let vs trye if thys be true, if we may credite giue:
It is not good nor reason will, that we shall this beleue.

For what is Man? a foolishe beast, a creature full of spight,
And wretched farre aboue the rest if we shall judge vpright.
Who is not of his nature nought? the way to vice is wide,
Wherin the feete of mortal men continually doth syde:
No Warning, Lawe, no Payne, nor Feare can cause them for to stay.
Againe, the path of vertue is a straight and painfull way,
Wherin but fewe doe vse to walke, and them you must constraine.
Who is wyse? the woman? or the childe? or all the Common traine?
The most (alas) are foolishe doltes.

(In the following notes, the formula "4:3 1/2" and so on means four lines of Latin are rendered by 3 1/2 lines in English. The periods are numbered according to the Latin; Googe's significant changes are given after the corresponding Latin word or phrase.)

295-96 1st period 1:1 "tenuia" (not trans.)

297-300 2nd 4:3 1/2 "fabricator maximus ille"—"God" (loss of epithet), "wyth hye and glorious hand" (addition—synecdoche), "melliora et nobiliora"—"More noble" (singular noun for doublet), "imperfectum . . . atque ignobile"—"Unperfect" (single adj. for doublet)

301-03 3rd 3:2 "viles omnes ac mente carentes, / Et miserae"—"of brutish minde" (change of meaning)

304-06 4th 3:2 1/2 "natura"—"he" (changed subj.), "animal melius"—"better things" (less particular), "ferarum" (omitted for allit.), rhetorical question—statement

307-08 5th 2:1 "herusque / Multorumque gregum, multorumque armentorum" (omitted—less redundant?)

309-10 6th 1 1/2:1 "nimirum maxima laus haec; / Nimirum satis hoc"—"now sure a goodly thing" (compression)

310-11 7th 1:1/2 "Ohe, fieri melius nil / Debuit aut potuit?"—"Was this his best?" (Elimination of distinction between "debuit" and "potuit")

311-12 8th 1:0 "iamiam perfectior orbis / Esse nequit?" (omitted)

312 9th 1/2:1/2 "fuit haec lovis infinita potestas?"—"is this the power of that Almighty king?" (pagan "lovis" omitted)

313-14 10th & 11th 2:2 "Non est, / Non est hoc? (Latin repetitive but G. does not improve)

315-16 12th & 13th 2:2 "animal"—"beast, a creature" (2 nouns for 1)

317 14th 1/2:1/2

317-21 15th 4 1/2:4 1/2 "omnes"—"feete of mortal men" (more particular?) "lubrica," "properant," and "feruntur"—"slyde" (1 word for 3—less detail)

322-23 16th & 17th 2:1 1/2 "aut cerdonum / Tot cohors?"—"or all the Common traine?" (less specific)

Googe does reduce his material here, but departures from the original are nearly always simply omissions rather than "minute compressions of phrase." In some cases he has eliminated redundancy by translating only one of a pair of words, e.g., 297, and for the same line his introduction of synecdoche adds concreteness. But in other cases he eliminates helpful distinctions, making arguments less rather than more "particular." In 310-11 he has the general
phrase “Was this his best?” where Palingenius is more dramatic, more anguished: “Oh, couldn’t He or wouldn’t He make anything better?” Googe’s description of the road to vice (317–18) does not have the force of the Latin because he translates two verbs and an adjective with the one verb “slyde.” The Latin is more particular, its sense closer to the following: “Slippery and broad is the way of evil, by which all hasten and are borne away.” Two lines show Googe’s fondness for alliteration, sometimes at the expense of intelligibility: “A folde of filthy feeding flocks” is unobjectionable, but “Who is not of his nature nought?” will likely puzzle the reader who does not have the Latin (“Quis non sponte malus?”) before him. In this particular passage Googe does not use as many of the so-called *Flickwörter* (auxiliary “do” and adverbs such as “whenas”), nearly meaningless words for filling out lines, as he does elsewhere. Although space here does not allow its presentation, analysis of the first part of Book XI, an exposition of the constellations which Googe renders very literally, confirms what the above examination indicates, namely that Googe’s fourteeners simply carry more information than Palingenius’ hexameters, and this, rather than any greater terseness, accounts for the number of lines Googe “saves” in his translation.

Passage 2, a test case for the quality of Googe’s poetry, was one of the two passages Warton singled out for praise:

Pandite nunc vestros fontes, vestra antra, sorores,
Quae iuga lauriferi Parnassi excelsa tenetis,
Et mihi (namque opus est) date centum in carmina linguas,
Ut possim aereos reges populosque referre,
Ludificatores hominum, scelerumque magistros,
Qui assidue vexant mortalia cuncta, suisque
Artibus humanas tradunt in tartara mentes.
Hic, ubi puniceo coniux Tithonia curru
Oceano emergit primum, primumque nitescit,
Nocturnas abigens rubicunda luce tenebras,
Ingentem vidi regem, ingentique sedentem
In solio, crines flammanti stemmate cinctum.
Pectus et os illi turgens, oculique micantes,
Alta supercilia, erectus, similisque minanti
Vultus erat, latae nares, duo cornua lata,
Ipse niger totus: quando nigra corpora pravis
Daemonibus natura dedit, turpesque figuras.
Dens tamen albus erat, sannae albae utrinque patentes,
Alae humeris magnae, quales vespertilionum,
Membranis contextae amplis, pes amplus uterque,
Sed qualem fluvialis anas, qualemve sonorus
Anser habere solet: referebat cauda leonem.
Now open wide your springs, and plaine your caues abrode displaye,
You Sisters of Parnassus hill, beset about with baye,
And vnto me (for neede it is) a hundred tongues in verse
Sende out, that I these Aierie Kings, and people may rehearse,
Deceiuers great of men, and guides of vice, which all that liue
Did stil molest: and by their craft mans soule to hell do giue.
Here first whereas in chariot red Aurora fayre doth ryse,
And bright from out the Ocean seas, appeares to mortal eyes,
And chaseth hence the hellish night, with blushing beauty fayre,
A mighty King I might discerne, plaste hie in lofty chaire,
His haire with fierie garland deckt, puft vp in fiendishe wise,
With browes full broade, and threatning loke, and fierie flaming eyes.
Two monstruous hornes and large he had, and nostrils wide in sight,
Al black himself, for bodies black to euery euell spright
And uggly shape, hath nature dealt, yet white his teeth did showe,
And white his grenning tuskes stode out, large wings on him did growe
Framde like the wings of Flindermice, his feete of largest sise,
In fashion as the wilde Duck beares, or Goose that creaking cries,
His taile such one as Lions haue.

(Goose p. 165)

In the first six lines Googe is very literal. Beginning in [7] he is freer, omit­
ting the epithet and translating “Aurora fayre” instead of “Tithonian spouse”; Googe regularly eliminates epithets. “Ocean seas” in [8] is a doublet, yoking a Romance with a native word (this will be dealt with below). “To mortal eyes” may be considered a more concrete detail or dismissed as a conventional tag employed as line filler. “Bright . . . appeares” in [8] is a colorless rendering of “nitescit” (“begins to glisten”). There is no reason (other than metrical) for “hellish night” in [9] instead of a more literal “nocturnal shadows,” a point to which Googe himself was sensitive, for he added this sidenote: “Hellish because it is darke.” “Blushing beauty fayre” is a good rendering of “rubicunda luce.” In [10] “hie in lofty chaire” is no more vivid than the Latin, which could be ren­
dered “I saw a monstrous king seated on a monstrous throne.” “Puft vp in fiendishe wise” in [11] is less specific than the Latin, which tells us the demon’s chest and mouth were puffed up. In [12] Googe uses a pair of redundant alliter­
ating adjectives, “fierie flaming,” and does not translate “erectus.” In [13] he again has two adjectives (“monstrous” and “large”) for one in the Latin, and again he ignores Palingenius’ intentional repetition of words (“primum, primumque” [338], “Ingentem . . . ingentique” [340], “latae . . . lata” [344]). “In sight” at the end of [13] is line filler. The meaning of the next two lines [14 and 15] is not as clear as it could be because Googe has partially followed the Latin word order: “for nature gave black bodies and base figures to depraved spirits” renders the idea more readily in English; separating “turpesque figuras”
from "nigra corpora" does not cause the hesitation in Latin, with its free word order, that the corresponding separation causes in English. "Grenning tuskes" in [16] may be an improvement on the Latin, which says merely "he had white teeth, and white grimaces were evident on either side." The next phrase, "large wings on him did growe," is less exact than the original, which specifies that they come from his shoulders. "Framde" in [17] is less specific than "Membranis contextae amplis" (349).

A characteristic of Googe's translation which Passage 2 makes clear is his use of a pair of synonyms for a single Latin word. Other examples, both from Book V, are indicative of his practice throughout the poem: "last and finall ende" for "ultimata meta" (V.656) and "Doth scale and clime" for "scandit" (V.879). If in such instances Googe diffuses rather than compresses the poetry, it is only by today's standards, for he was following a translating tradition. It is perhaps significant that he uses the old practice, employed by Caxton, of pairing a Latinate word with a Saxon one, whereas Golding, his contemporary, nearly always uses two native words in his doublets.21

These passages have some awkward syntax, though nothing as difficult as many of Googe's lines, which are sometimes nearly opaque unless the reader has the Latin before him. For example, in the following it is impossible to tell if "best" modifies "seede" or "grounde," though in the Latin "optima" can modify only "semina":

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{semina quamvis} \\
\text{Optima, si terrae fuerint mandata sinistris} \\
\text{Sideribus . . .}
\end{align*}
\]  
\hspace{1cm} (VI.364–66)

If seede amyd the grounde
Though best be cast, and therto starres agreeing not be founde . . .
\hspace{1cm} (Googe p. 92)

Googe has some tendency to bowdlerize. Several examples could be cited, but the clearest is the following:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Hinc uxor pulchrum et generosum saepe maritum} \\
\text{Odit, et immundi penem calonis adorat,} \\
\text{Aut aliquem externum, quem vix bene noverit, ardet.}
\end{align*}
\]  
\hspace{1cm} (IV.369–71)

By this the wife disdaines
Hir husbande faire of gentle bloud, and greater ioy sustaines
A lither lousy loute to haue, or vnaquainted wight.
\hspace{1cm} (Googe p. 49)
Hence the wife often hates her handsome and noble husband and adores the penis of a filthy slave or burns for some stranger whom she scarcely knows.  

(my translation)

Googe makes the poem less Catholic by invoking God instead of the angels or saints. This he does simply by rendering plural nouns (e.g., “divos”) in the singular. There are, however, two categories of references to dieties which do not fall under this heading of Protestantization. In the first, Palingenius follows the practice of Renaissance Latinists by referring to the Christian God as “Deus” as well as “Juppiter” and “Tonans.” Googe usually translates “God,” the natural equivalent in English. In the second category, he translates plural oaths in the singular; e.g., “pro superi” (VI.442) becomes “O God.” This too is idiomatic English, as is clear from the entry “deus” in Thomas Cooper's *Thesaurus* (London 1565), in which are the following examples among others: “Iuvantibus diis—Cicero—With gods helpe . . . Di faciant—Cicero—God graunte: woulde to God.”

In those cases, however, where Palingenius is attempting to prove the existence of angels or telling how to communicate with them, it makes a difference if his words are translated in the singular or plural. The climax of the ZV is a final treatment of the summum bonum, this time defined as the invocation of and communication with angels (XII.329-535, pp. 235-40 in Googe). Palingenius uses a number of words to refer to the angels (“dii,” “superi,” “numina,” “caelicolae”) and two (“daemones” and “manes”) to refer to demons. Googe often translates these in the singular. Line 519, in which singular and plural are mixed, is illustrative: “Posse hominem affari divos coram, atque videre” becomes “That men may come to speake with God, and them in presence see.” Googe may simply be sloppy, as Golding sometimes was in his handling of dieties. But he has added sidenotes, not in the Latin text, which explicitly refer to the one God: “God careth not . . . God regardeth not . . .” and so on. In this passage Googe has often, though not consistently, blunted the Catholic impact of the poem by eliminating many of the exhortations to pray to the saints (or angels, depending on how one wishes to translate “dii,” “caelicolae,” and so forth) and recommending instead that one pray to God Himself.

An anti-Catholic bias is evident in other sidenotes. In Book VI, which has a meditation on death, Googe adds this note next to a passage on the underworld: “The description of Hell according to the opinion of dreaming Dolts” (p. 104). And next to a brief exposition of metempsychosis is this note: “The fond opinyon of Pythagoras which sauoureth of the musty leuen of Purgatory.” In IX.749-58 Timalphes exhorts the poet to pray to the angels (“cIVES caeli, angelicasque cohortes/ . . . sanctosque ministros”), for they can aid one by driving away danger and interceding with God. Googe leaves none of this out but adds this note: “This doctrine would be read, but not folowed: for it is derogatori to gods glory and maiestie” (p. 175).
Googe makes clear which aspects of the ZV most appealed to him in the "Epistle dedicatorie" to the 1565 edition. Palingenius, he says, was a man of such excellent learning and Godly life, that neither the vnquietnesse of his time (Italie in those dayes raging wyth most cruell and bloudy warres) ne yet the furious tyranny of the Anti-christian Prelate (vnder whose ambusious and Tirannicall gouernaunce he continually liued) coulde once amase the Muse, or hinder the zealous and vertuous spirit of so Christian a Souldiour. I haue many times much mused wyth my selfe, howe (liuing in so daungerous a place) he durst take vpon him so boldely to controll the corrupte and vnchristian liues of the whole Colledge of contemtuous Cardinalles, the vngracious overseings of bloudthyrsty Bishops, the Panchplying practises of pelting Priours, the manifold madnesse of mischeuous Monkes, wyth the filthy fraternitie of flattering Friers.

As we have seen, Palingenius needed help to be the thoroughgoing Protestant Googe wanted to present to England. This is not surprising, for while Palingenius criticizes abuses in the Church he is not clearly Protestant. In fact, he was Catholic enough that the Tridentine commission for reforming the Index recommended that he be rehabilitated, although the recommendation was not taken.24

In sum, Googe is no more “spare” than Palingenius. If he omits some redundancies he introduces as many of his own. He does not consistently eliminate or alter things he is uncomfortable with (e.g., sexual references or praying to the angels), though he often employs sidenotes to warn his reader about doctrines in the text he considers unsound. His syntax can make passages incomprehensible, and if he sometimes uses a concrete image for an abstraction in the original he frequently does the reverse. Like his contemporaries, he uses doublets and alliteration freely. In translating Palingenius, then, Googe inevitably put him in English dress. But that Protestant, Tudor poet is not the Palingenius schoolboys encountered along with Mantuan in the third form at their grammar schools.

NOTES


4. This list looks suspiciously short, but the only Latin editions printed in England are those listed in STC, 2nd ed. Neither Wing nor NUC nor the *British Library Catalogue* lists any editions after 1639. Perhaps the revision of Wing or the *Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue* will uncover later printings.


19. All quotations are from Marcellus Palingenius, *Zodiacus Vitae, sive, De hominis vita libri XII*, ed. Karl Weise (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1832).

20. Braden, p. 27.


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