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The Readership of *Zodiacus vitae* in Early Modern Poland, Pomerania and Silesia

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Abstract

Zodiacus vitae, an influential philosophical poem by Marcello Palingenio Stellato, enjoyed popularity in Early Modern Europe, as evidenced by over sixty foreign editions, several translations and a 16th-century Polish-language paraphrase. Despite the latter being a testimony to Palingenius' work being read by the most prominent Renaissance humanists in Poland, the poem's readership in Old Polish literature has remained largely unknown. The goal of this article is, therefore, to outline a new map of its readership in Early Modern Poland, Pomerania and Silesia, citing its presence in book inventories, public libraries, book collections and monastery libraries. *Zodiacus* circulated for instance in the 16th and 17th centuries among booksellers and bookstore owners in the most important printing centre in Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – Lviv (Piotr of Poznań, Baltazar Hybner) and Cracow (Helena Unglerowa, Franciszek Jakub Mercenich). It was no less popular in the private book collections of the townspeople, physicians, noblemen and aristocracy. Among the owners of the poem can be found for example: famous scholar and professor Jan Brożek, historian at the court of King Stephen Báthory – Giovanni Michele Bruto, poet Jan Gawiński, reformer of education and the mayor of Toruń – Henryk Stroband. Some light on the problem of the *Zodiacus*' popularity is also shed by an analysis of copious amounts of marginal notes in over seventy extant copies of Palingenius' work preserved in Polish libraries.

Keywords

Zodiacus vitae, Palingenius, book mobility, readership, Early Modern Poland

1. Introduction

In the closing verses of Book 12 of the Latin-language philosophical poem *Zodiacus vitae*, Marcello Palingenio Stellato (Palingenius) uses the theme of *vade liber*, wishing that his work would travel to far-off lands and cities to praise his name for centuries to come.¹ His wishes were to come true (ironically so, considering how both the author and his book were consigned to oblivion in his native Italy)² and the poem's readership and reception is an interesting example of textual mobility in the history of Early Modern print. The influence of *Zodiacus* on European literature in the 16th and 17th centuries is undeniable and it can be seen in the works of the most prominent poets, writers, philosophers and mathematicians, to name only William Shakespeare or Giordano Bruno. And yet, despite being widely circulated in Early Modern Protestant schools, it remains insufficiently studied.³ In Poland three areas of the poem's impact can be distinguished; depending on the ebb and tide of its popularity, it was read as a philosophical treatise – a commentary on morality and ethics and as a repository of general knowledge of the world. Palingenius' work is also full of literary themes, powerful metaphors and gnomic tropes, though mostly not his original inventions; these were an important facet to its European reception and contributed to its status of a poetic *copia rerum et verborum*. This paper aims to investigate the new sources of Palingenius' popularity in Early Modern Poland, Pomerania and Silesia.⁴ The undertaken study points to possible new directions of Palingenius' poem's influence and expands the knowledge of its readership in this area, which warrants a stipulation that *Zodiacus'* inspirational impact on Old Polish literature and culture should be reexamined.

¹ [M.P. Stellato] *Marcelli Palingenii "Zodiacus vitae"*, introd. ed ed. critica di F. Bacchelli, Bologna 2012, p. 347 (12, 560–584). All mentions from *Zodiacus vitae* have been sourced according to Franco Bacchelli's edition, which is transcription of the Venetian *editio princeps* from 1536.

² F. Bacchelli, "Note per un inquadramento biografico di Marcello Palingenio Stellato", *Rinascimento* 25 (1985), pp. 275–292; *id.*, "Un maestro di scuola napoletana a Forlì: Marcello Palingenio Stellato", in *Sculture di carta e alchimie di parole: Scienza e cultura nell'età moderna*, ed. by E. Casali, Bologna 2008, pp. 19–28.

³ On the poem's reception see: F. Bacchelli, *Scienza e filosofia nell'era di Marcello Palingenio Stellato. Saggio di un'edizione critica e apparato delle fonti dello Zodiacus vitae*, vol. 1–7, Firenze 1999, tesi di dottorato di ricerca in storia della scienza, Università degli Studi di Firenze (PhD thesis); T. de Vivo, *La fortuna europea dello Zodiacus vitae di Marcello Palingenio Stellato*, dottorato di ricerca in Civiltà dell'Umanesimo e del Rinascimento, ciclo XXV, tesi svolta presso il Dipartimento di lettere e filosofia, Università degli Studi di Firenze, Firenze 2015 (PhD thesis); M. Beckwith, *A Study of Palingenius' "Zodiacus vitae" and Its Influence on English Renaissance Literature*, Ohio State University, Ohio 1983 (PhD thesis).

⁴ Pomerania and Silesia were on those times the area of Polish and German fight, and both had strong German-Polish trade, cultural and national network. Pomerania was from the 15th century part of Poland, Silesia which today is the part of Poland, from the 16th to 18th century was the neighboring province of Germany, but it still had a vast and vivid cultural connections with Poland, see: H. Barycz, *Ślązacy w polskiej kulturze umysłowej na tle polsko-śląskich związków duchowych w przeszłości*, Wrocław and Warsaw 1946; *id.*, *Ślązacy na Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim od XV–XVIII w.*, Warsaw 1935.

2. *Vade igitur liber – Zodiacus vitae* in Early Modern Poland, Pomerania and Silesia

It has long been established that, since it was mentioned, quoted and paraphrased by the most excellent Polish humanists such as Mikołaj Rej,⁵ Jan Kochanowski⁶ or Sebastian Fabian Klonowic,⁷ Palingenius' work must have been widely read. A map of the poem's impact in Old Polish literature has been outlined in the time-honoured studies of Aleksander Brückner⁸ and in more recent ones by Valentina Lepri⁹ but the scale of that impact has remained largely unknown. Until recently the studies on *Zodiacus* in Poland focused on mapping its references in the works of those poets and writers; however its popularity can be attested not only by the other literary works it influenced but also by its presence in inventories left by townspeople, nobles and magnates, in 16th-, 17th- and 18th-century book trade records, and finally in book collections of eminent scholars and scientists. This research has yielded new findings on the poem's readership in Early Modern Poland, Pomerania and Silesia, and has provided answers to several points of interest: In what social circles could the poem have been read? Who might have had a copy in their library? Which passages sparked the most interest of its readers and do they suggest new directions for its reception?

Palingenius' poem must have reached Poland quite early: even before its first foreign edition (i.e. the Basel edition by Robert Winter), the 1536 Venetian *editio princeps* was purchased by Bishop Andrzej Krzycki before his passing.¹⁰ The first notable evidence of the poem's reception can be traced back to the 1550s, which is when Mikołaj Rej's *Wizerunk własny żywota człowieka poczciwego* (a paraphrase of Stellato's work) was published,¹¹ alongside a laudatory epigram by Krzysztof Kobylński,¹² and *De generibus dicendi* by Jakub Górski; the latter quotes a pas-

⁵ J. Pyszkowski, *Mikołaj Rej's „Wizerunek“ und dessen Verhältnis zum „Zodiacus vitae“ des Marcellus Palingenius*, Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde von der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität Freiburg in der Schweiz, Krakow 1901 (PhD thesis); Z. Kniaziolucki, *Do genezy poematu Mikołaja Reja „Wizerunk żywota poczciwego człowieka“*, Krakow 1908, pp. 211–328; E. Sarnowska-Temeriusz, “Wizerunk i Zodiacus vitae”, in M. Rej, *Wizerunk własny żywota człowieka poczciwego*, part 2, ed. by H. Kapelusz, W. Kuraszkiewicz, and I. Rostkowska et al., Wrocław 1971, pp. 33–50; E. Drzewiecka, “Palingenio e Rej. Alcune osservazioni sulle affinità tra lo ‘Zodiacus vitae’ e il ‘Wizerunk własny żywota człowieka poczciwego’”, *Rassegna Italiana di Argomenti Polacchi* 6 (2015), pp. 7–21.

⁶ M. Żurowski, “Kochanowski and Palingenius”, *Slavia Orientalis* 33 (1984), fasc. 3–4, pp. 585–599.

⁷ B. Milewska-Ważbińska, “O roli twórczej inspiracji (na podstawie „Zodiacus vitae” Palingeniusza i „Victoria Deorum” Klonowica)”, *Meander* 44 (1989), no. 3, pp. 127–134.

⁸ A. Brückner, *Mikołaj Rej. Studium krytyczne*, Krakow 1905, pp. 150–151.

⁹ V. Lepri, “‘Hic liber libenter legitur in Polonia’: Mapping the Popularity of the ‘Zodiacus vitae’ in Poland Between the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries”, *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* 59 (2015), pp. 67–94.

¹⁰ “Appendix I, 4: List Piotra Kmity do St. Kilowskiego, Wiśnicz 26 V 1537”, in K. Janicki, *Carmina. Dzieła wszystkie*, ed. by J. Krókowski, transl. by E. Jędrkiewicz, introd. and comment. by J. Mosdorf, Wrocław 1966, pp. 304–305.

¹¹ Maciej Wierzbęta's first edition of *Wizerunk* was published in 1558.

¹² [K. Kobylński], *Christophori Kobylński Epigrammatum libellus*, ed., introd. and annot. by L. Winniczuk, Warsaw 1961, p. 64. See also Brückner, *Mikołaj Rej*, p. 150; U. Bednarz and J. Sokolski, “Wstęp”,

sage of Book 12 of *Zodiacus* in his work.¹³ The poem's unceasing popularity in the 1570s is confirmed by Alfonso Pisanus, a Spanish Jesuit priest who was a teacher at a Poznań Jesuit college at that time.¹⁴ Although hitherto unverified by extant sources,¹⁵ it is plausible that *Zodiacus* circulated among citizens of Poznań and in the local bookselling industry in the 16th century (this city had a vast network of connections with German towns and cities in which the Reformation movement was active).¹⁶ The Poznań-based booksellers and their stock reached the farthest corners of Poland – the first permanently settled bookseller and bookstore owner in Lviv was Piotr of Poznań.¹⁷ Piotr of Poznań was by far not the only Lviv bookseller whose inventory listed *Zodiacus vitae* – the poem also featured in three other such inventories of booksellers who were active in the Galician capital in the 16th and 17th centuries.¹⁸ Lviv booksellers along with clergymen, not only shaped the reading tastes of the city by supplying books that were widely read in the intellectual spheres of western Europe but also pioneered in creating the first book collections.¹⁹

The popularity of *Zodiacus* in early modern Poland is also corroborated by book inventories from Krakow, which, in the 16th century, was the most important printing centre in Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.²⁰ The poem features for example in the post-mortem book index of Helena Ungler (who died in 1551) – the widow of Florian Ungler, a printer and bookseller; after her husband's passing in 1536, she took over his printing business.²¹ Ungler's

in: Palingeniusz (Marcellus Palingenius Stellatus), *Zodiak życia*, transl. and ed. by U. Bednarz, introd. by U. Bednarz and J. Sokolski, Wrocław 2015, pp. 76–77.

¹³ J. Górski, *De generibus dicendi. O rodzajach wymowy*, ed. and transl. by R. Sawa, ed. by A. Axer, Warsaw 2010, p. 300. Górski's work was first published in 1559.

¹⁴ V. Marchetti, "Ricostruzione delle tesi antitrinitarie di Niccolò Paruta", in *Movimenti ereticali in Italia e Polonia nei secoli XVI–XVII. Atti del Convegno italo-polacco, Firenze, 22–24 settembre 1971*, Firenze 1974, pp. 222–223; F. Bacchelli, "Palingenio e la crisi dell'aristotelismo", in *Sciences et religions. De Copernic à Galilée (1540–1610)*, ed. by Ch.H. Lorh et al., Rome 2000, pp. 362–363. See also: Lepri, "Hic liber libenter legitur in Polonia", p. 74.

¹⁵ There is no mention of *Zodiacus vitae* in the (admittedly small) extant inventories of the books in possession of Poznań burghers, see: M. Kramperowa and W. Maisel, "Księgozbiory mieszczan poznańskich z drugiej połowy XVI w.", *Studia i Materiały do Dziejów Wielkopolski i Pomorza* 6 (1960), pp. 25–308; *Inwentarze mieszczańskie z lat 1528–1635 z ksiąg miejskich Poznania*, ed. by S. Nawrocki and J. Wislocki, Poznań 1961; *Inwentarze mieszczańskie z wieku XVIII z ksiąg miejskich i grodzkich Poznania*, vol. 1: *Z lat 1700–1758*, ed. by J. Burszta and C. Łuczak, Poznań 1962; vol. 2: *(1759–1793)*, ed. by J. Burszta and C. Łuczak, Poznań 1965.

¹⁶ M. Wojciechowska, *Z dziejów książki w Poznaniu w XVI wieku*, Poznań 1927 (see especially chapter I: "Księgarstwo poznańskie do roku 1600", pp. 1–42).

¹⁷ K. Badecki, *Piotr z Poznania, pierwszy stały księgarz lwowski † 1559 r.*, Lviv 1932.

¹⁸ Hanus Bryker (died 1573), Baltazar Hybner (died 1592) and Jan Alnpek (died 1636) – see *Lwowski inwentarze biblioteczne w epoce renesansu. Inventaria librorum leopolitana aetatis renascentium litterarum*, ed. by J. Skoczek, Lviv 1939, pp. 136, 203, 346.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²⁰ J. Kiliańczyk-Zięba, "The Book Inventory of the Sixteenth-Century Krakow Bookbinder, Maciej Przywilcki", in *Documenting the Early Modern Book World: Inventories and Catalogues in Manuscript and Print*, ed. by M. Walsby and N. Constantinidou, Leiden 2013, p. 263.

²¹ *Materiały do historii drukarstwa i księgarstwa w Polsce. I. Inwentarze księgarń krakowskich Macieja Scharffenberga i Floriana Unglera (1547, 1551)*, ed. by A. Benis, Krakow 1890, p. 4; Brückner, *Mikołaj Rej*, p. 150.

contributions as a printer and publisher were invaluable,²² as was his and hers influence in promoting readership – at the time, the bookstore of Ungler was one of the most active in Krakow.²³ The city itself was an important centre of book trade and its impact reached as far as Lviv in the east and Hungary in the south. A century after that, Franciszek Jakub Mercenich and Michał Górecki stocked *Zodiacus* in their Krakow bookstores.²⁴ The picture of readership in Krakow in the 16th and 17th centuries is completed by private collection inventories, which provide insight not only into books that were probably available back then but also those that were actually purchased and read. The extant inventories belonged mostly to Krakow's patricians, representatives of the liberal arts and noblemen. A copy of Palingenius' poem could be found in the book collections of a nobleman named Waclaw Chodorowski,²⁵ and Mikołaj Bronowski, also a nobleman and an attorney. The library collections of the latter are named in the court proceedings discussed by Włodzimierz Budka: the Bronowski family townhouse was taken over in 1585 by Stanisław Dębiński, the *starosta* of Chęciny, who took advantage of its lawful owner's absence.²⁶ The inventories of legal, historical, theological and assorted other writings, including by ancient and Early Modern authors, feature an item called *Marcelli Palingenii Zodiacus vitae*, valued at 17 grosz coins.²⁷ It is also listed in the inventories of the burghers of Lublin²⁸ and in those of wealthy, high-ranking aristocracy. A notable example of the latter, an inventory of a library of over 4,000 books, among them no fewer than four copies of Palingenius' poem, was the library of Jerzy Stanisław Dzieduszycki (1670–1730) – a *starosta* of the (now Ukrainian) town of Żydaczów (Zhydachiv), a *koniusz* (Master of the Horse) of the Crown, and the owner of the former land estate in Cucułowce (now Vilkhivtsy, Ukraine).²⁹ Another of these examples is a 1592 post-mortem inventory of books of Giovanni Michele Bruto,³⁰ a historian at the court of King Stephen Báthory. Since most inventories have not survived to the present day and those that have are often incomplete, they only present a fragmentary insight into the reading tastes

²² See A. Kocot, *Artyści „czarnej sztuki”. Typografia druków Floriana Unglera i Macieja Wirzbięty*, Krakow 2015, pp. 33–126.

²³ *Materiały do historii drukarstwa i księgarstwa w Polsce. II. Inwentarze bibliotek prywatnych (1546–1553)*, ed. by A. Benis, Krakow 1891, p. 202.

²⁴ R. Żurkova, “Księgarnia Franciszka Jakuba Mercenicha (1610–1613)”, *Rocznik Biblioteki Polskiej Akademii Nauk w Krakowie* 41 (1996), p. 23; *ead.*, *Księgarstwo krakowskie w pierwszej połowie XVII wieku*, Krakow 1992, p. 217. I would like to thank Professor Radosław Grześkowiak for paying my attention to some inventories mentioned above.

²⁵ *Materiały do historii drukarstwa i księgarstwa w Polsce. II.*, p. 228.

²⁶ W. Budka, “Biblioteka Mikołaja Bronowskiego”, *Przegląd Biblioteczny* 2 (1930), p. 210.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

²⁸ E. Torój, *Inwentarze księgozbiorów mieszczan lubelskich z lat 1591–1678*, Lublin 1997, p. 36.

²⁹ A. Betlej and A. Markiewicz, *Pałac w Cucułowcach w świetle inwentarza pośmiertnego Jerzego Stanisława Dzieduszyckiego z 1731 roku*, Krakow 2016, pp. 69, 75, 80, 91.

³⁰ I. Béla, *A magyar könyvkultúra múltjából*, Szeged 1983, p. 123. See also A. Knot, *Jan Michał Brutus – nadworny historyograf Stefana Batorego*, Lviv 1936.

of their era. Even so, they are still an important source for studying the culture and reading habits of that time.

A lot of information on the popularity and reception of the poem in 16th-to-18th-century Poland, Pomerania and Silesia can be garnered from its copies extant in Polish libraries. So far, more than seventy of them have been identified, and the number is steadily increasing. More than half of those are 16th-century editions, when *Zodiacus* was published and edited most frequently. In Poland Palingenius' poem was not printed, so all copies kept in Polish libraries are foreign editions. The dominant publishing houses are: the Lyon printhouse of Jean de Tournes³¹ and Basel publishing houses. German editions from Hamburg, Leipzig and Frankfurt am Main are also frequent, as are Dutch, Genevese and Parisian ones. Among the extant Polish 16th- and 17th-century copies, the oldest is the one kept in the Jagiellonian Library in Krakow, published in Basel in 1543,³² while the most recent is the 1832 German edition.³³

Research into this corpus has yielded two notable findings. First, bookplates and stamps on the copies of *Zodiacus* are invaluable in pinpointing their origin and owner, or the institution it belonged to. Naturally, a sign of ownership is not tantamount to the owner actually reading the book but the very fact of having a copy of *Zodiacus* in their collection implies at least an interest in the Italian poet's work. Second, the reception of the work by its readers can be garnered from the copies, as most of them bear the marks of in-depth and attentive reading, such as underlines and comments in the margins. Several of those copies are worth considering in more detail.

The first is the copy of *Zodiacus vitae* from the Library of the Polish Academy of Science (PAN) and Polish Academy of Learning (PAU) in Krakow.³⁴ It has no comments in the margins and very few underlines; however, the title page bears a signature: *Joannis Gawiński* – a famous Polish pastoral poet from the 17th century. I compared the signature with *Helikon* (1681–1682) – his handwritten collection of sentimental poems preserved in the manuscript section of the University Library in Warsaw.³⁵ Based on this evidence, Jan Gawiński could indeed have had a copy of Palingenius' work on his bookshelf. This is not, however, to say that he also must have read it or been inspired by it, although a hypothesis like this cannot be discounted – as has been recently noted, Gawiński does follow certain concepts and ideas of the Italian poet's work.³⁶

³¹ Joannes Tornaesius, the father (1504–1564) and the son (1539–1615), were Protestant publishers based in Lyon and appointed servants to the King of France.

³² Jagiellonian Library, Nowo-łacina II 510. This copy of *Zodiacus* does not have a title page but it was identified as the 1543 Robert Winter Basel edition.

³³ This is the 1832 Carl Hermann Weise Leipzig edition, Public Provincial Library in Kielce, 100022.

³⁴ Marcellus Palingenius Stellatus, *Zodiacus vitae*, Basel: Officina Brylingeriana, 1574.

³⁵ On the Gawiński's *Halikon*, see: E. Rot, "Filologiczne prolegomena do „Sielanek” Jana Gawińskiego. Autograf, pierwodruki, inne przekazy oraz dostępne przedruki „Sielanek” Jana Gawińskiego”, *Terminus* 9 (2007), no. 2, p. 230.

³⁶ E. Rot, "Kłęska awanturnicy w *Mowie ostatniej*... Jana Gawińskiego. Historia a tradycja literacka", *Napis. Pismo poświęcone literaturze okolicznościowej i użytkowej* 9 (2003), pp. 100–101.

Another example is the copy of *Zodiacus* published in Amsterdam in 1628 and currently in possession of the Jagiellonian Library.³⁷ It used to be a part of the vast book collection of Jan Brożek (1585–1652), a Polish mathematician, philosopher and astronomer, and a Professor at Jagiellonian University. The scientist's copy does not bear his bookplate but the spine of its leather binding was branded with his monogram: "J. B.", as was Brożek's custom. The lining of the book also features his characteristic handwritten notes. Among them are three passages from the poem that must have sparked the owner's curiosity (6, 479; 7, 927–929; 8, 362). Above those, there is a note saying that Stellato's name was listed in a eulogy of Pope Urban VIII written by Gabriel Naudé (1600–1653).³⁸ Curiously enough, Palingenius' name does not feature anywhere in that poem, which suggests a simple mistake on the part of the Krakow scientist. However, his note on the scholar and librarian Gabriel Naudé is an important clue for the study of the European reception of *Zodiacus vitae* – Naudé not only had a copy of the poem in his library³⁹ but also quoted it in his works.⁴⁰

Interestingly, Brożek – an eminent mathematician and adherent of the Copernican model of the universe – did not comment on nor contest Book 11 of *Zodiacus*, where the world is described according to Ptolemaic theory. Even more curious is Brożek's complete silence on the issue of the infinity of the universe,⁴¹ which was the paramount and most original concept of Stellato's, earning his work a place in the history of ideas⁴² and reverberating in the writings of philosophers such as Giordano Bruno. Apart from the gnomic verses on ethics and morality of *Zodiacus* noted by Brożek in the lining, the scientist was intrigued by only one more passage on the alchemy of the Philosopher's Stone (10, 180–238), as evidenced in the cursory note on the back of the book: *lapis aetereus*, together with the page where it is discussed.

The list of notable people who used to own a copy of Palingenius' poem includes Jacek Przybylski, a 18th- and 19th-century philologist, translator and scholar who, like Brożek, bequeathed his vast collection to the Jagiellonian Library. That *Zodiacus vitae*⁴³ was part of that collection is confirmed by a printed bookplate in French pasted on the inside cover (*de la Bibliothèque d'Hyacinthe Przybylski*) of one of Krakow's extant copies of the poem and the former owner's handwritten

³⁷ Marcellus Palingenius Stellatus, *Zodiacus vitae*, Amsterdam: Jan Jansson, 1628 (Jagiellonian Library in Krakow, Neolat. 517).

³⁸ The poem in question was most likely *Panegyricus dictus Urbano VIII Pont. Max., ob beneficia ab ipso Magistrum Thomam Campanellam collata*, Paris: Sébastien Cramoisy et Gabriel Cramoisy, 1644.

³⁹ W. Boutcher, *The School of Montaigne in Early Modern Europe*, vol. 2: *The Reader-Writer*, Oxford 2017, p. 183 (footnote 325).

⁴⁰ See for example: G. Naudé, *Advis pour dresser une bibliothèque*, Paris: François Traga, 1627, p. 73.

⁴¹ He devoted some passages to this problem, see: J. Brożek, *Wybór pism*, vol. 1, ed. by H. Barycz, Warsaw 1956, pp. 147, 149.

⁴² A. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*, Cambridge (MA) 1933, p. 115.

⁴³ Marcellus Palingenius Stellatus, *Zodiacus vitae*, [Basel: Nicolaus Brylinger, 1557] (Jagiellonian Library in Krakow, Nowo-łacina 512).

signature inside that copy, dated 1772.⁴⁴ Despite being clear of marginal notes, the Przybylski copy is brimming with underlined passages and in many places, with metrical patterns written above verses.⁴⁵

Many copies of *Zodiacus vitae* bear signatures of Catholic monastic libraries from Poland, Pomerania and Silesia.⁴⁶ In 1558, *Zodiacus* was entered on the Catholic Church's list of prohibited books, which does not seem to have hurt its popularity – in fact, it may have spurred the curiosity of certain Catholic circles in the “godless” and “heretic” work. In the former monastery copies of the poem, there are plenty of notes and crossed out passages, suggesting a clergyman's hand. For instance, the title page of the copy from the White Canons' library sports an inscription in the bordure, next to the title: *est liber hic prohibitus in indice romano* (“this book is prohibited in the Roman index”).⁴⁷ Some of the copies in the Polish corpus have clearly been censored, which can be seen in the crossing out of the passages attacking the clergy. Such evidence can be found in the copy kept in the Ossolineum Library in Wrocław.⁴⁸ The watchful eye of the clerical censorship did not miss Book 5's pointed accusations of the clergymen, in which Palingenius derides the monks, lays bare their duplicity, licentiousness and avarice, and advises the reader not to let a friar or monk enter their house as they will likely cuckold their host. Some previous reader of this passage left a succinct comment: *frater vel monachus pellendus* (“a friar or a monk should be put to flight”). The remark has been struck out by another hand.

Parts of Book 3, in which the poet accuses the clergy of mendacity and quotes Epicurean views that run counter to the Christian beliefs of the immortality of the soul, have also been subject to censorship. Similarly censored is one of the *Zodiacus* copies kept in the Jagiellonian Library (Nowo-łacina 516)⁴⁹; thanks to the preserved bookplate, the former owner of that copy can be assumed to have been Marcin (Martinus) Waleszyński, a Krakow Canon priest.⁵⁰ In the copy, alongside multiple

⁴⁴ *Ex libris VD. Hyacinthi Przybylski in Acad[emia] Crac[oviensis] Prof[essor]is 1772*. J. Przybylski was not the only one owner of this book – inside it there is another exlibris – both of them were mentioned by Małgorzata Mirek, see: *Księgozbiór prywatny Jacka Idziego Przybylskiego w zbiorach Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej w Krakowie*, ed. by M. Mirek, Krakow 2010, p. 111.

⁴⁵ See for example pages of this copy: 39, 51, 57, 61.

⁴⁶ Krakow Camaldolese monks (Jagiellonian Library, Cam. X. I. 20), the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star in Wrocław (Wrocław University Library, 457758), the Dominicans of Ząbkowice Śląskie (then Frankenstein; Wrocław University Library, 455395), the Friars Minor Capuchin of Świdnica (then Schweidnitz; Wrocław University Library, 455399), the Cistercians of Lubiąż (then Leubus; Wrocław University Library, 455401, 455403), the Jesuits of Kłodzko (then Glatz; Wrocław University Library, 457727), the Premonstratensians of Wrocław (Wrocław University Library, 455404, 457728) and the Friars Minor Conventual of Jawor (Wrocław University Library, 455398).

⁴⁷ Marcellus Palingenius Stellatus, *Zodiacus vitae*, Lyon: Jean de Tournes, 1581 (Wrocław University Library, 457728).

⁴⁸ Marcellus Palingenius Stellatus, *Zodiacus vitae*, Basel: Nicolaus Brylinger, 1552 (The Ossolineum Library in Wrocław, sdXVI-8017).

⁴⁹ Marcellus Palingenius Stellatus, *Zodiacus vitae*, Lyon: Jean de Tournes et Guillaume Gazeau, 1556.

⁵⁰ As shown by studies by Henryk Barycz, there were several Marcin Waleszyńskis – see H. Barycz, “Metryka promowanych Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Krakowskiego z lat 1639–1741”, *Nasza Przeszłość. Studia z dziejów Kościoła i kultury katolickiej w Polsce* 3 (1947), pp. 202–203. Most plausibly, however, this copy of *Zodiacus* belonged to Marcin Jan Waleszyński (1669–1739), a Professor of the Lubrański

pointers, the passage devoted to the debauchery of the monks (9, 997–1014) has been commented on as “heresia.”

The many and varied notes and comments shed some light on what parts of the poem resonated the most with its readers and answer some questions on the interpretations of *Zodiacus*. The largest group of marginal notes and commentaries, both in the mentioned Polish corpus of seventy-two copies and in many foreign poem’s edition, touches upon issues of ethics and morality, suggesting that these aspects of the poem have been of paramount interest to its readers. This also supports the view that *Zodiacus vitae* was considered something of an “everyman’s textbook” of morality, suggesting that these aspects of the poem have been of paramount interest to its readers. The commonest type of marginal notes are one- or two-word comments, such as *virtus*, *gula*, or, less frequently, longer summaries of particular passages. The *praecepta* – musings on various aspects of everyday life – were also likely read with enthusiasm and were often copied, as is evidenced in the comment quoting Book 5, in which Palingenius elaborates on whether a man ought to marry.⁵¹ *Zodiacus vitae* is filled with adages and gnomic verses, which also seem to have been attractive to the poem’s audiences – they frequently feature in the margins of multiple copies.

Marginal notes on poetics, although by far less numerous than those on ethics and morality, are also interesting – they prove that the poem was read by learned humanist thinkers, perhaps teachers, who deciphered *Zodiacus*’ many references to the writings of Antiquity as well as pointed out vital issues that were debated extensively by 16th-century theoreticians. Notes on this can be found in some copies with comments where authors touch upon poetic fiction several times in the poem (such as “beautiful fiction” or “fiction” regarding Book 9 of the poem where Palingenius describes his journey to the moon).⁵² Another example is where, apparently, the well-read reader recognised echoes of Virgil’s *Eclogues* and the *Aeneid* in Book 4 and made sure to highlight their findings and comment on them in the margins: “imitation of Book 3 of *Aeneid*” and “imitation of Virgil’s *Eclogues*.”⁵³

Surprisingly, comments on the major philosophical issues of the poem, which are recurring themes in most of its twelve books, are fairly scarce here. Notes on the concepts of good and bad fortune, God, nature, wisdom, stupidity or the infinity of the universe, which were a frequent subject in poetry, were quite rare in the studied copies. One commentary on the problem of free will, with a note of the page where it is discussed, appears in the Gdańsk library copy.⁵⁴

Academy and the Academy of Krakow, a Doctor of theology educated in Krakow, and a Krakow Canon, who bequeathed his collection to the Collegium Maius – *Katalog Poloników XVI wieku Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej*, vol. 3: *Indeksy*, ed. by M. Malicki and E. Zwinogrodzka et al., Krakow 1995, p. 317.

⁵¹ Marcellus Palingenius Stellatus, *Zodiacus vitae*, Basel: Nicolaus Brylinger, 1557 (Wrocław University Library, 382272;).

⁵² Marcellus Palingenius Stellatus, *Zodiacus vitae*, Lyon: Jean de Tournes 1608 (Książnica Zamojska, sdXVII.o.1206). ZV. 10, 454–470; 10, 774.

⁵³ Marcellus Palingenius Stellatus, *Zodiacus vitae* (1581) (The Ossolineum Library in Wrocław, sdXVI-8019).

⁵⁴ Marcellus Palingenius Stellatus, *Zodiacus vitae* (1557) (Polish Academy of Science Library in Gdańsk, Cf 7386).

Palingenius' poem had the potential to reach a large audience in Poland in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, given the fact that aside from private collections, it was included in Poland's first public libraries. The Toruń copy of the work, together with another one kept in the Copernicus Library⁵⁵ which was property of the mayor of Toruń Henryk Stroband (1548–1609), were once available in the library of Toruń College, called *Bibliotheca Publica Mariana*, which was launched upon a reform of the school in 1594 under the supervision of a humanist teacher, Ulryk Schober.⁵⁶ It was one of the first such facilities in the region, open not just to students and teachers looking for source materials for their classes, but to the citizens of Toruń. The City Council Library of Gdańsk (*Bibliotheca Senatus Gedanensis*), founded in 1596, worked under the same principle. This means that, hypothetically, Palingenius' poem could have been read by anyone living in Toruń and Gdańsk between the late 16th century and early 18th century.

Many copies of the poem still bear the bookplates of dissenting Protestant schools – as preliminary research shows – in the period between 1550 and 1660. So far, the poem's influence on Poland's dissenting educational facilities can be seen in several areas which matched its popularity outside of schools – *Zodiacus* was read for its ethical teaching, scientific and encyclopedic knowledge and numerous literary themes. Support for this hypothesis comes from the latter half of the 16th century in Toruń and Gdańsk, from two esteemed Protestant schools with significant standing in Poland's educational history.

The copies found in Polish libraries are very diverse and fall on a spectrum, whether in terms of the signs of ownership and the voluminous marginal notes and comments. The study of the latter is one of many important tasks of those researching the history of readership⁵⁷ – not only do they provide insight into the observations, experiences, tastes and interests of the readers of a given era, but also constitute a vital transmission vehicle for views and thoughts. Handwritten notes in the margins are a universal mode of expression for their times, and *Zodiacus* was enthusiastically commented on, as proved in examination of over two hundreds copies from different European collections. The copies of the poem from Polish libraries, however, have been very interesting: title pages resembling palimpsests with their many bookplates, stamps and signatures, copious marginal annotations, commentaries and underlines all testify to the vivid interest of Polish and Silesian readers in the Italian poem in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

There is a lot of evidence to suggest that *Zodiacus* was widely popular and read in every corner of Poland and in the then-foreign Silesia: from Gdańsk in the north to Krakow in the south, from Lviv in the east to Wrocław in the west. Palingenius' poem could also be purchased from the leading booksellers of the era, which can be seen in the inventories of their bookstores, and did not only sit on the private bookshelves of the townspeople, noblemen and aristocracy, but could also be borrowed

⁵⁵ The Nicolaus Copernicus Public Provincial Library in Toruń, 111353 and 2507.

⁵⁶ S. Tync, *Ślązak Ulryk Schober. Konrektor i działacz kulturalny toruński (1559–1598)*, Wrocław 1960.

⁵⁷ K. Głombiowski, *Problemy historii czytelnictwa*, Wrocław 1966, p. 41.

from Poland's first public libraries in major cities, proving that its impact and reach may have been wider than initially thought. The bookplates show that the poem was also read by prominent poets, scholars, scientists and high society, which also broadens the potential spectrum of influence that has not yet been considered in the study of Old Polish literature and culture.

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