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Research interests: Baroque religious literature, examination of religious consciousness,

biblical tradition in literature

"SPIRITUAL DELICACIES OR GAMES USEFUL TO MEN BANISHED FROM THE EARTHLY PARADISE TO THE HEAVENLY PARADISE" BY ALBERYK KOŚCIŃSKI. CONCERNING THE SPIRITUAL THOUGHT OF THE XVIIth CENTURY

The article is one of the first attempts to present the works of Alberyk Kościński whose "Spiritual Delicacies or Games Useful to Men Banished from the Earthly Paradise to the Heavenly Paradise" (Poznań 1695) was aimed at helping nuns or potential recipients to perfect their inner self. The article discusses the three goals of meditation mentioned by Kościński ("elimination of imperfections, the acquisition of holy virtues and unison with God") which relate to the three stages of spiritual life (purging, enlightenment, and unison). Thus, the article adds to the picture of the views presented by other authors. However, the innovation lies in the motif of "game" as an inner activity stimulating the spiritual sphere and encouraging spiritual transformation, as described in Kościński's work.

The article focuses on the role of the metaphorical images used by the clergyman to describe the meditative act: the internal transformation, the experience of closeness to and unity with God. Thus, the article emphasizes the need for meditative practice discussed by Kościński, i.e., the titular "spiritual delicacies" which can help one achieve eternal life.

KEY WORDS: meditative prose, game, vanitas, St. Ignacy Loyola, applicatio sensuum.

The purpose of this article is to present the reflections of Alberyk Kościński and their role in the life of a man and the spiritual benefits arising out of such practices. The author will discuss the notions of religious perfection and the three ways leading to unity with God, which Kościński takes up in his publication. The article will emphasize the role of the metaphorical images used by Kościński to describe the meditative act: the internal transformation, the experience of closeness to and unity with God.

Little is known about the author of *Spi*ritual Delicacies, Alberyk Kościński, who lived in the 17th century (Estreicher 1905: 122; cf. Nowak 1985: 221–222). There is no information about his date of birth and death, childhood and youth; it is also difficult to determine where he studied. The title card reveals only that he was a member of a religious order and which positions he occupied; he was a professed monk¹ and superior of the Cistercian Order in Bledzew. The work is dedicated to Krystyna Katarzyna Pawłowska of the Wierzbno Coat of Arms,

¹ Professed monk – a monk who has taken religious vows – cf. Karłowicz *et al.* 1908: 1008.

abbess of the Cistercian Monastery in Trzebnica², revealing the author's closeness to the nun: "To my most Gracious Lady and Benefactress".

Spiritual Delicacies or Games Useful to Men Banished from the Earthly Paradise to the Heavenly Paradise³ (Poznań 1695) by Alberyk Kościński can be defined as a post-Tridentine meditative prose⁴ directed at the spiritual transformation of man; the work exhibits the defining characteristics of the genre, which belongs to the branch of utilitarian literature⁵.

The title of the work, Spiritual Delicacies or Games Useful to Men Banished from the Earthly Paradise to the Heavenly Paradise, contains a metaphorical imaging. It refers to the sensual sphere and to the imagination of the addressees.

The word "pieszczoty" (delicacies) present in the title-icon can, in the metaphorical sense, have the following meanings according to the dictionary of Samuel Bogumił Linde: "pieśćliwość, delikackość, pieszczochostwo" (caressing, tenderness, endearment)⁶. In the metaphorical sense, it can also be the synonym of something beautiful, subtle, pleasant to the eye or ear. The adjective "duszny" (spiritual) is connected with the soul, is spiritual in nature, as presented by the lexicographer using sentences

with the adjective "duszny": "Duszne siły daleko ważniejsze sa, niźli cielesne" (Ezop. 123), "Od Boga w dary duszne, opatrzony będąc" (Birk. Dom. 97)7. The motto "zabawy" (games) in the title of Kościński's work refers to "internal games", i.e., according to Linde, internal activities, spiritual exercises whose purpose is to convert and train men in the ways of faith (Linde 1860: 701–702). Orgelbrand's dictionary states that "zabawa" is an activity, an occupation, something which occupies one's time⁸. The meaning of this word was brought up by such scholars as Antoni Czyż (Czyż 1984: 69-83), Mirosława Hanusiewicz (Hanusiewicz 1997: 9-22), and Hanna Dziechcińska (Dziechcińska 2002: 461-466), who noted that in the 17th century the term had a different meaning than in modern times, closer to "work", "occupation", or "exercise"9.

An important work on the subject of the literary text as a source of "zabawa" was written by Hanna Dziechcińska who rightly noted that in the Old Polish times the word "zabawa" had many meanings (Dziechcińska 1981: 118). Barbara Otwinowska, who researched the notion of *otium negotiosum*, presented the genealogical source of "zabawa" (Otwinowska 1980: 169–186). Thus, it is also the name of a genre of Baroque utilitarian literature, which presents or projects various activities, including internal ones¹⁰. However, to view "zabawa" as an independent literary

Mentioning Krystyna Katarzyna Pawłowska, abbess of the Cistercian Monastery in Trzebnica – cf. Borkowska 2004: 57.

³ Original Polish title: *Pieszczoty duszne abo zaba*wy ludziom z raju ziemskiego wygnanym do niebieskiego raju pielgrzymującym bardzo pożyteczne.

⁴ Matters of the post-Tridentine meditative prose were investigated by the researchers: Nowicka-Jeżowa 1988; Nowicka-Jeżowa 1992; Czyż 1995; Goliński 1997; Kaczor-Scheitler 2009; Wichowa 2010; Grupiński 2011.

⁵ The notion is discussed by Skwarczyńska 1933: 129–134.

⁶ Linde 1858: 116 (metaphor: "Pieszczoty słońca były tym gorętsze, że ostatnie"; *Gomul, Ciury* I, 8).

⁷ Linde 1854: 562 ("duszny – od duszy, duszy się tyczący").

⁸ *Słownik języka polskiego* [so-called Wilno dictionary], Vol. II, Wilno 1861: 2063.

Linde 1860: 701–702. Cf. Hanusiewicz 1997:

¹⁰ Cf. Czyż 1984: 69–83. O literaturze stosowanej: Skwarczyńska 1932: 1–26; Czyż 2003: 7–22.

genre would be an exaggeration¹¹. Rather, it can be classified as a *quasi*-genre or to quote Antoni Czyż: "a genealogical fragment" (Czyż 1984: 77). According to Czyż, the term "zabawa" usually refers to works constituting intellectual and literary exercises on a given topic combined with spiritual pleasure. Upon the analysis of Baroque pieces with "zabawa" in their title, the researcher concluded that they may be: "Hours of the Virgin, acts, hymns, songs, prayers, chaplets, litanies serving as components of the main text" (Czyż 1984: 77); thus, mainly identifying "zabawa" with religious service or meditation.

Literary works with "zabawa" in the title appeared quite often in the Old Polish times¹². Noteworthy examples include Jan Daniecki's Zabawy (Kraków 1606), "a collection of exceptionally ribald facetias", as remarked by Julian Krzyżanowski (Krzyżanowski 1979: 292), the religious Zabawy duchowe (Kraków 1627) offered to the Benedictine Sisters, Zabawka miła i pożyteczna do zbawienia wiecznego istotnie potrzebna, published in the 17th century by Kraków Jesuits (Czyż 1984: 73-74), Zabawa wesoło-nabożna found in 17th century Carmelite manuscripts, the epigram collection Zabawa chrześcijańska albo żywot zbawienny Pan Boga naszego Jezusa Chrystusa troistemi epigramatami wyrażony (Lwów 1700) by Jan Stanisław Jabłonkowski, or the 18th century Krótki zbiór duchownych zabaw (Częstochowa 1710) by Wojciech Stanisław Chrościński (Hanusiewicz 1997: 11). Given the popularity of works referred to by their authors

The motif of "zabawa" as an internal activity, stimulating the spiritual activity of the soul and encouraging transformation can also be observed in Alberyk Kościński's Spiritual Delicacies. This work is a collection of meditations, which, given the fact that they involve a certain internal effort, should be viewed as mental activities (spiritual activities, "zabawa"), directed at a specific object and aimed at its cognition. Meditation can also be viewed as a state of its practitioner¹³. The tension between the stability of the state and the dynamics of the activities involved in the act of meditation is a defining characteristic of the meditative stance¹⁴

Kościński's work was addressed towards the monastic community; its purpose was to aid nuns in the improvement of their inner selves. However, the work was also directed at any potential recipients who, thanks to meditations, have acquired the abilities of self-cognition (nosce te ipsum) and self-assessment, through which a man realizes the need for spiritual transformation. The purpose of Spiritual Delicacies was to help the Sisters and any other recipients understand the terrible consequences of sin and make the internal effort necessary to encounter God, to concentrate on the contempt of worldly concerns, to realize the misery and vanity of Earthly life, and, finally, to understand the duties arising from the chosen monastic life, the monastic vows, the benefits of the meditation and spiritual exercises, which enable the achievement of

as "zabawy", one can indeed speak of a "quasi-genre".

¹¹ One reason why "zabawa" cannot be assigned with a separate place in the genealogy is because it has the characteristics of various genres.

 $^{^{12}}$ More works with "zabawa" in the title are named by Czyż 1984: 71–80.

¹³ Kostkiewiczowa 2010: 10; cf. Dąbrowski 2008:67.

¹⁴ Kostkiewiczowa 2010: 10. The meditative stance and the role of language in meditation are discussed by Dąbrowski 2008: 62 et seq.

monastic perfection, and ultimately unison with God (*via unitiva*).

The work begins with: "Teachings for those who are only commencing their exercise in reflection" and it finishes with: "Saturday meditation about Our Most Holy Lady" 16. The whole is composed of "games" (i.e., reflections) prepared for ten days. One day encompasses three meditations each involving two preparations, three points, and a conversation.

At the beginning of *Spiritual Delicacies* Kościński defines the notion of meditation:

Beloved of Christ: you must know that meditation or reflection is the training of our soul through spiritual reflection and Godly affection, aimed at the elimination of imperfections, the acquisition of holy virtues and unison with God through love (Kościński: 1965: 1)¹⁷.

All three goals of meditation ("elimination of imperfections, the acquisition of holy virtues, and unison with God") relate to the three stages of spiritual life (purging, enlightenment and unison)¹⁸ which the soul must pass in order to unite with God. In the meditation *On the three paths through which men wish to achieve the ultimate end,* the author discusses the notion of the three

paths to unison encouraging the readers to "appear in the eyes" of God (PD IV, 3, P1: 56)¹⁹ and ask Him for help in the choice of the path which will please Him (PD IV, 3, P 2: 56). Kościński invites the reader to reflect:

[...] consider that there exist **three paths**, through which different men travel to achieve one end. For better understanding you may picture **three sick men** attempting to regain health. **Three men for the King's favour** competing. Three men on a pilgrimage to the same City (PD IV, 3, 1: 57).

Referring to the three stages of mystic life, Kościński's three paths allude to the treaty *De triplici via* by St. Bonaventure and the three-step mystical road to God described by Ignacy Loyola in his *Ćwiczenia duchowne*. The first path is that of purging (*via purgativa*), during which a man attempts to root out the inner sin. The second, the enlightenment (*via illuminativa*), enables the acquired virtues to enlighten and beautify man. The third step — that of unification (*via unitiva*) — represents the soul's unification with God through love.

With regard to the first path, Alberyk Kościński notes that this path is followed by those who wish to reach the end of their journey, "but do not want to take the measures leading to it" (PD IV, 3, 1: 57). The attitude of this peregrinator is illustrated by the author using the *similitudo* of a sick person who wishes to regain health, but takes no measures (medicine) towards that. The analogy serves to encourage transformation: "Here you should reflect upon yourself so

¹⁵ Nauka dla tych, co się dopiero poczynają ćwiczyć w rozmyślaniu.

¹⁶ Medytacyja na sobotę o Najświętszej Pannie.

¹⁷ All quotes from the following edition: Piesz-czoty duszne abo zabawy ludziom z raju ziemskiego wygnanym do niebieskiego raju pielgrzymującym barzo pożyteczne na dziesięć dni przez W. Ks. Alberyka Kościńskiego, profesa i przeora bledzowskiego Zakonu S. Cystercyenskiego spisane i do druku z dozwoleniem Zwierzchności podane, 1965 A.D., Poznań, Drukarnia Akademicka. The cycle of ten-day meditations in the Spiritual Delicacies is preceded by the Teaching, the Warning, and the one unnumbered Meditation. On the benefit of spiritual delicacies (Preparations 1–2, Points 1–3 and Discussion).

¹⁸ Cf. Aumann 1993: 64; Kaczorowski 1983: 44; Garrigou-Lagrange 1998: 20.

¹⁹ The abbreviation PD used in the article refers to the original title of the work: *Pieszczoty duszne*. Roman numerals indicate the days of meditation, while Arabic numerals are used to name the meditation, preparation preceding the meditation (P1–2) or point of meditation (1–3), and the page.

that you hold on to those measures that lead toward salvation, [...] and beg of the Lord to guide you away from the wrong and onto the correct path" (PD IV, 3, 1:58). The "second people" ("drudzy ludzie") referred to by the clergyman are those who, instead of following the life of Christ and obeying the monastic rules during their journey toward God, intend to employ measures of their own liking, much like the sick who, instead of following the doctor's advice, choose to take the medicine they prefer. The recommendations (imperatives) contained in this point indicate the need to submit to the will of God and trust Him: "[...] follow the Christ, fulfil the biddings of God, [...] ask His mercy, that you may follow this path to salvation" (PD IV, 3, 2: 58-59). In the third stage on the path to perfection indicated by the author, during which the believers "hold on tightly to the measures that lead to the ultimate end" (PD IV, 3, 3: 59), one can see an emphasis on the will to serve God and on perseverance in the pursuit of salvation.

Meditation is a mental process activating three mental facilities: memory, intellect, and will, which should be combined during reflection with imagination and feeling. Kościński writes about "the exercise of the soul" and the three facilities participating in the meditative act:

- 1. The exercise of the soul involves the exercise of memory, reason, and will.
- 2. The exercise of **memory** means that we should remember the God that created us, saved us and called us to the true faith and the monastic life. Moreover, we must always remember the four ultimate concerns: Death, Judgement, Hell, and Eternal Glory.
- 3. The exercise of **reason** means that we should carefully consider God's

- mysterious ways, the peculiar secrets of Christ's Sufferings, how God, having turned man, contributed to men, and how we contribute to God. Also: how do we behave ourselves at the Holy Monastery? The exercise of reason also means that every day we should think carefully on the four ultimate concerns.
- 4. The exercise of will means that we should activate our will and affection, so as to rid ourselves of sins, bad habits and other imperfections, acquire holy virtues and by the power of love unite with the Lord (PD, Nauka: 1–2).

The purpose of all facilities is to act in unison (Bednarz 1968: 24); thus, rendering meditation a ritual separate from other intellectual activities of a man. An important role in this spiritual activity is played by memoria, which supplies knowledge in the thought process, enabling the object of reflection to be placed in a broader context. Reason also serves a major function; it maintains the intellectual construct supporting the thought process and its culmination. Will enables the practitioner to maintain concentration and mental effort in the exploration of a given subject²⁰. Significance is also assigned to emotions and imagination which facilitate "the search for points of reference and the definition of the perspectives of the act of meditation" (Kostkiewiczowa 2010: 13).

The purpose of meditation is to realize the misery of worldly concerns and to

²⁰ The participation of the three facilities in meditation is discussed by St. Ignacy Loyola: "Memory allows us to remember the contents of a given spiritual truth or mystery of Christ's life; reason helps us to reflect and draw conclusions, whereas the will arouses proper sentiments and facilitates decision-making" – cf. Bednarz 1968: 24.

concentrate on the idea of contempt for the world (*contemptus mundi*) that is vain and devoid of permanent values. Reflecting upon human existence, the author emphasizes the transient, temporal, fragile nature of human life: features expressed mainly in relation to the image of the pilgrim (*homo viator*) who for a short time peregrinates the Earthly space:

Consider carefully how **short human life is**, how quickly it passes [...] how vain all the things that end with its passing: human wealth, honour, favours, friendships, fame, offices, titles – all these like **a boat on water**, like a river running, like a flying arrow, like **smoke**, like a **flower**, like a **shadow**, passing without leaving a single sign of their existence (PD II, 3, 1: 31–32).

The clergyman employs popular Baroque literature motifs (smoke, shadow, flower)²¹ with heavy axiological load to illustrate the transience of Earthly existence ²². Presenting the notion of vanity, the author uses the top of vanitas (the world as a wilting flower, human life as sailing) which serve to convey the general image of the worldly life as impermanent and short in the face of eternity, and hostile to the human being. Awareness about the transience of life and the inevitability of death should, therefore, prompt a man to reflect upon the contempt of the world and upon the four ultimate concerns (cf. Kowzan 2003). Contrasting the notion of vanitas with the perfection achieved after the death and comparing these two perspectives – that of

the worldly and the eternal life – Kościński emphasizes the transcendental dimension. Thus, the clergyman directs the following advice to the practitioner of meditation (the potential recipient):

Abandon vanity and show love to the God eternal, and **move toward** Him in your life (PD II, 3, 1: 32).

Employ the time allowed you to praise God, serve Him and love Him dearly, as if every moment of your life was the last. Constantly watch over yourself, as you will not know the day or hour, and in doing so you will ensure a good and happy death (PD II, 3, 2: 33).

God will unexpectedly call upon a man to give an account of his Earthly existence, which will determine his participation in eternal life²³. Since the inevitable death will close off any possibility of improvement, one must strive for penance and conversion during life, so as to prepare oneself for the eternal life which promises safe existence to everyone. The fear of sudden and unexpected death ("Constantly watch over yourself as you will not know the day or hour") and the uncertain judgement of God induced by the author is not meant, however, to cause despair, but rather to encourage men to reflect and change their behaviour. In the context of worldly vanity and transience, the author emphasizes the rank of monastic life (vita contemplativa), which is a proper form of escape from the illusory worldly values.

The act of meditation gains the quality of a cognitive activity, directed at "me" which explores the object in question; it becomes richer through the meditative knowledge gained in the process, explores itself (nosce te ipsum), recognizes its own

²¹ For more information on the topic cf. Künstler-Langner 1993: 43, 55.

²² Baroque authors that employ *vanitas* motifs are as follows: M. Sęp Szarzyński, S. Grabowiecki, S. Grochowski, K. Miaskowski, D. Naborowski, Z. Morsztyn, H. Morsztyn, W. Potocki, K. M. Juniewicz, M. K. Sarbiewski, J. Baka.

²³ Cf. Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Mt 25, 1–13).

abilities and limitations, and, thus, transforms its inner self²⁴. The need to explore "me" for the purpose of self-cognition is shown by the recommendations to the soul preceding the meditation *On knowing thyself* ²⁵:

Imagine hearing the Lord say to you: "Beloved, if you seek to know me, you must know thyself first" (PD V, 1, P 1: 60).

Ask for the Lord's grace, that you may know thyself (PD V, 1, P 2: 60).

Thanks to meditation, one becomes better acquainted with one's inner self, "[...] it is through this activity that man [...] returns to his inner self [...]" (Słomka 1992: 58). This return is **phenomenological** in nature. After all, meditation internalizes the exterior; to quote Johannes B. Lotz: "it guides man back into [...] his own self, back into that personal centre where he is entirely himself, [...] thus its aim is, most of all, to become one's own self" (Lotz 1985: 27). Kościński explains that thanks to self-cognition, a man is capable of selfcontempt, exercising his humility (V, 1, 1: 60) and realizing that, since a man is "the Lord's greatest work, the noblest creature made in the image of God" (PD V, 1, 1:60), he should strive for holiness.

The application of the senses (*applicatio* or *accomodatio sensuum*)²⁶, a method introduced by St. Ignacy Loyola, plays an important role in the act of meditation²⁷.

Senses can be the cause of evil, on the one hand, and facilitate the performance of exercises, on the other hand. According to St. Ignacy Loyola, by mortifying the external senses through the internal senses one can use them to "glorify God" (St. Ignacy Loyola 1968: 116–117). Kościński notes that in order to improve the inner self, one must conquer the desires and "train" the senses which are the cause of sin:

Bear in mind that to achieve monastic perfection, one must **keep careful watch over the senses**, affections and desires, with which every man is born. These must be tamed, directed toward God and employed to serve His glory (PD V, 3, 2: 70).

However, thanks to their use during religious practices, one can achieve focus and discipline in the conversation with God. Thus, *Spiritual Delicacies* contain a prayer to Christ asking His control over human senses, thanks to which a disciplined man can become obedient to Him: "[...] give me the power to **keep careful watch** over myself and my senses, so that they serve none but you, Jesus Christ" (Rozmowa: 72–73). The "taming" of the senses gives rise to the need to forgo one's own will and imitate the suffering Christ.

Monastic life is a means of achieving monastic perfection, the third stage on the path of internal development (*via unitiva*), as described by Kościński in the meditation *On monastic perfection*²⁸: "[...] perfection is united with God in love and completely merging the human will with that of God" (PD VII, 1, 1: 84). When discussing the entrance into this stage, the author employs gnomic structures: "[...] to not strive for

²⁴ For the discussion of change as the result of meditation cf. Dąbrowski 2008: 80–81.

²⁵ O poznaniu samej siebie.

²⁶ Regarding the application of senses (*applicatio sensuum*) cf.: Loyola 1968: 26, 35–36, 73, 116–117, 126, 128, 306; Mrowcewicz 1994: 333–363; Poprawa-Kaczyńska 1995: 259–270.

²⁷ I. Loyola adopted the method from Church tradition and improved it. The notion of the five spiritual senses was discussed by Origen, whose ideas were further developed by St. Bonaventure – cf. Majkowski

^{1984: 121–123;} cf. Martz 1962: 25–26, 78–79, 81–85; Mrowcewicz 1992: 153–164; Aumann 1993: 165–166.

²⁸ O doskonałości zakonnej.

perfection is to fail" (PD VII, 1, 3: 86); "Nor should perfection be viewed as an ultimate end – rather, one should continue to improve" (PD VII, 1, 3: 86). Finally the clergyman states which measures should be employed to achieve this stage. The author recommends monastic vows which "remove all hurdles in the way of monastic perfection" (PD VII, 2, 1:88), obedience to God, which "deprives us of our own will, which can quickly lead us to evil, but is tamed in obedience, thus conquering Satan" (PD VII, 2, 2: 89). Kościński also encourages the imitation of Christ's life: "Beg for mercy, that you may understand the life of your Lord and imitate Him" (PD IX, 1, P 2: 106).

Employing metaphorical imagery expressed through detailed description, Kościński presents the benefits arising from monastic life and meditation. Using the metaphorical epithets: "spiritual delicacies" ("pieszczoty duszne") or "holy games" ("święta zabawa"), which are a synonym of reflection, Kościński encourages the readers to prepare themselves for their own "spiritual delicacies". He notes that during the act of meditation one must "present oneself" before God and ask Him to take away "all games and hurdles" which stand in the way of that "holy **game**" (Medytacyja. O pożytku pieszczot dusznych, P 1: 3). Kościński draws attention to the benefits of reflection: that "extraordinary spirituality" ("[...] when you abide by this game, God Himself will come down, calling and guiding you toward it [...]"; PD, Medytacyja. O pożytku pieszczot dusznych, 1:4). The author emphasizes the conversion achieved through these practices ("[...] performing such games or recollections, a man can expect to be transformed

and converted to the ways of God in as short a period as half a year;" PD, *Medytacyja*. *O pożytku*..., 3: 6). Referring to patrological authority, Kościński praises the act of meditation emphasizing its beneficial influence on eternal life:

The Holy Scholars of the Lord rightly praise reflection as the key to Heaven, the manna that tastes of all virtues, the source of all grace, the best medicine for all that is evil (PD, Medytacyja. O pożytku..., 3: 6–7)

As the clergyman notes, the primary goal of meditation is to improve oneself in the face of inevitable death and, thus, achieve salvation ("[...] perform the **game**, bearing in mind that it is the best means of preparation for the road to eternity" (PD, *Medytacyja*. *O pożytku pieszczot dusznych*, 2: 6).

The monastic reality is a space in which God manifests Himself in the soul and "ignites" in it the desire to love and serve Him. Only those who earn the privilege of "communing" with the Maker and experience His closeness during the act of meditation will know the "pleasure" of reflection or "spiritual delicacies". Alberyk Kościński's work emphasizes that such practices can be beneficial, and progression through the stages of spiritual life will enable the man to ascend to Heaven. The metaphoric imagery presented in Spiritual Delicacies, weaved out of "sensual matter", influences the sensations and imagination of the recipient to facilitate a deeper understanding of the object of reflection. In this way the clergyman intends to exercise spiritual influence over the adepts and encourage their transformation.

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Pieszczoty duszne abo zabawy ludziom z raju ziemskiego wygnanym do niebieskiego raju pielgrzymującym barzo pożyteczne na dziesięć dni przez W. Ks. Alberyka Kościńskiego, profesa i przeora bledzowskiego Zakonu S. Cystercyenskiego spisane i do druku z dozwoleniem Zwierzchności podane. 1695. Poznań: Drukarnia Akademicka.

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Gauta 2014 09 15 Priimta publiktuoti 2015 01 15