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## REFLECTIONS OF VICTORIAN AESTHETICS IN ADAM OF ST VICTOR'S SEQUENCES

Although aesthetics did not exist in the Middle Ages (nor in antiquity) in the sense of being distinguished from other disciplines, there were aesthetic views in both metaphysics and technology: the issues of aesthetics considered in philosophical and theological works and also in the writings of musicians or architects constituted a coherent theory, as it was built within the framework of a commonly held worldview. An outstanding expert on aesthetics, the author of the three-volume, world-renowned *History of Aesthetics*, Władysław Tatarkiewicz, distinguished two types of aesthetic theses in the intellectual culture of the Middle Ages, namely: beliefs and insights. Beliefs, in his view, were derived mainly from metaphysical theories, so they were fixed and, as such, constituted assumptions in aesthetic concepts. Perceptions, on the other hand, were less general and peculiarly aesthetic, being empirical and individual in nature, being based on observation of art and aesthetic sensations.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The main aesthetic beliefs, according to Tatarkiewicz, are as follows: 1. the concept of beauty the Middle Ages inherited from antiquity: things are beautiful that please, arouse admiration and awe – it was clarified by Thomas Aquinas – that liking is to be direct, through viewing, contemplation. 2. The scope of the concept of beauty was very broad: In addition to corporeal, sensual beauty, spiritual (moral) beauty and supernal, most perfect, ideal beauty were accepted. 3. The concept of beauty was close to the concept of good – they differ conceptually but not materially: all beautiful things are good and all good things are beautiful. 4. Beauty is realized in the world, in a fourfold sense: after Genesis, it was assumed – the beauty of the world; the concept of all-beauty, *pankalia*. 5. The beauty of the world was explained by the fact that it is the work of God or (in Neoplatonic terms) that it is a reflection of his beauty. 6. The Middle Ages read beauty in nature as in art: the arts patterned themselves after nature, and nature was sought to be understood in the likeness of the arts, as the work of a divine artist. 7. The basic theory of beauty was a combination of Platonic proportion

The subject of the article is an aesthetic thought, based on fixed, established beliefs in writings, and contained in the poetic form of the sequence of Adam of St Victor, an author who belonged to the school established in the 12th century and operating at the monastery of canons dedicated to St Victor in Paris (hence the name “Victorians”). Counted among the outstanding figures of the twelfth-century revival, he is considered the initiator of “a new era in the field of liturgical poetics.”<sup>2</sup> This scholar, cantor and poet functioned in two religious centers of Paris, first in the chapter at Notre-Dame Cathedral and later as a member of the community at the Abbey of St Victor.

Adam’s poetic works composed for the monastic community reflect the teaching of the school, which appealed to aesthetics in its work of renewal (*restauratio*) and human formation. It owed its original and rich curriculum to the outstanding scholar and its spiritual founder, Hugh, who cultivated beauty in all its richness and incorporated it into the life of the community. In all likelihood, Adam had the opportunity to draw from the living word of Hugh’s most outstanding master, at an already mature age, and undoubtedly the learning and atmosphere of the environment, inspired him; we are convinced of this by reading his works, which resonate with the teaching of the school and breathe its mood.

Accordingly, the first part of this article will present the main ideas of Hugh’s aesthetics, before moving on to read its elements in selected Adam *Sequences*, composed for various occasions and celebrations of the liturgical year.

## 1. THE MAIN ASSUMPTIONS OF HUGH’S AESTHETICS

Aesthetics encompasses the science of beauty as well as the science of art, in our discussion we will focus on the concept of beauty to read its elements in the poetry of Adam of St Victor. As already mentioned, Adam’s understanding of beauty was drawn from the thought of Hugh, who is considered the first medieval aesthete after John Scotus Eriugen. He is the first author to devote a complete treatise to the subject of beauty entitled *De tribus diebus*, and what constitutes

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and Neoplatonic light: beauty consists in harmony (proportion) and brilliance. 8. The evaluation of beauty was complex: As an attribute of God – it is perfect, but the sensual beauty of the world – it is imperfect and arouses bad feelings hence the asceticism or distinction: if a person treats sensual beauty as the ultimate goal – he acts badly, but good if it serves the pursuit of higher beauty. Cf. Władysław TATARKIEWICZ, *Historia estetyki*, vol. 1-2 (Warszawa: PWN, 2009), 310-315.

<sup>2</sup> Jerzy PIKULIK, “Sekwencje Adama z St Victor w Paryżu w polskich rękopisach muzycznych,” *Archiwa, Biblioteki i Muzea Kościelne* 20 (1970):165.

Hugh's originality is his unique sensitivity to beauty in its broadest sense and its inclusion in the school's educational program.<sup>3</sup>

The Victorian master of aesthetics follows the ancient objectivism according to which beauty is a constitutive element in the very structure of things. From the point of view of the theory of being, he presents beauty on three levels: the beauty of God, which manifests itself spiritually in souls and sensually in things; the second level is the beauty of the human soul; and the third level is sensual beauty. Hugh bases his aesthetics on the fundamental Platonic idea that material things are signs and images of invisible things; hence, the main axis of his reflections on beauty and its role in human life is the juxtaposition of what is visible in the world with invisible realities. Accompanying this theory is the idea, known since antiquity, that the world is a theophany and appears as a book written by the hand of God. As far as the beauty of visible nature is concerned, just as there are two basic kinds of sense of Scripture (literal and spiritual), similarly there are two ontological aspects in nature and consequently two aesthetic attitudes. Hugh describes this vividly: Just as the unlearned man, when he opens a book and looks at the shapes of the letters, does not understand the meaning of the writing, so the carnal and unintelligent man does not perceive divine things and only notices in the Bible the poetic beauty of the "story." Similarly, in created things, the uneducated man (*illiteratus*) delights only in the external aspect, while the wise man (spiritual) admires in what he sees the wisdom of the divine Artist.<sup>4</sup> The beauty of creation: *decor creaturarum* is the most visible sign of divine

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<sup>3</sup> On this subject see: Donna R. HAWK-REINHARD, "Hugh of Saint Victor Pedagogy," in *A Companion to the Abbey of Saint Victor in Paris*, eds. Hugh B. Feiss, and Juliet Mousseau (Leyde: Brill, 2017), 111-146; Wanda BAJOR, "«Pulchrum esse» – The role of beauty in the educational programme of the Parisian St Victor School," *Argument* 12, no. 2 (2022):293-309.

<sup>4</sup> "For this whole sensible world is a kind of book written by the finger of God, that is, created by divine power, and each creature is a kind of figure, not invented by human determination, but established by the divine will to manifest and in some way signify the invisible wisdom of God. However, just as when an unlettered person sees an open book and notices the shapes but does not recognize the letters, so stupid and carnal people, who are not aware of the things of God, see on the outside the beauty in these visible creatures, but they do not understand its meaning. On the other hand, a spiritual person can discern all things. When he considers externally the beauty of the work, he understands internally how wondrous is the wisdom of the Creator. Therefore, there is no one who does not find God's works wonderful, but the foolish person admires only their appearance, whereas the wise person, through what he sees externally, explores the deeper intent of the divine wisdom, just as in one and the same writing, one person notices the color or shape of the figures, whereas another praises their meaning and signification." HUGH OF ST VICTOR, *On the Three Days (De tribus diebus)*, in *Trinity and Creation. A selection of Works of Hugh, Richard and Adam of St Victor*, eds. Boyd Taylor Coolman, and Dale M. Coulter (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 63-64.

wisdom, the *vestigium Dei*, the contemplation of which causes interioration, directing us towards our own interiority, where we encounter God himself.

Although Hugh is aware of the insignificance of the world and instructs on the need to keep a distance in admiring it, he contemplates its beauty with great fondness and familiarity. For earthly, sensual aesthetic pleasure is a symbol of infinite joy and its value lies in the fact that it is a prelude to the mystical life; its power and attraction the Victorian master wished to put into the service of spiritual ascent. The acquisition of wisdom alongside the reading of Scripture and moral experience – also happens through the admiration of the grandeur and beauty of nature.

## 2. THE CONCEPT OF BEAUTY

In considering how to read the elements of aesthetics in Adam's *Sequences* from St Victor, two aspects of Hugh's theory of beauty will be important: the pan-aestheticism he adopted and the resulting, formal categories of beauty. Since the invisible spiritual world is to be cognisable by what is visible (*per visibilia ad invisibilia*), the extension of aesthetic perception to the participation of all five senses seems a logical consequence. The whole human being rejoices in beauty, not only with sight and hearing, but also with taste, smell and touch. About the smell itself, Hugon writes as follows:

It is thus with smell. Incenses have their odors, ointments their aromas, roses their scent. Thickets have their smell, and meadows have theirs. Wastelands have their odors; wood, flower and fruits have theirs. All things that emit a sweet fragrance and breathe out sweet smells serve the olfactory sense and were created for its pleasure. In the same way taste and touch have various delights that can be adequately pondered on the basis of the foregoing.<sup>5</sup>

## 3. CATEGORIES OF BEAUTY

As already mentioned, Hugh articulated his main aesthetic theory in a systematically structured philosophical and theological treatise *De tribus diebus*, consisting of three parts. From the perspective of the aesthetic thought contained in the Adam's *Sequences*, the first part is important, in which the author articulated his own classification of formal aesthetic categories, combined with

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<sup>5</sup> HUGH OF ST VICTOR, *On the Three Days*, 73.

their phenomenological, awe-inspiring and sensitive description of the beauty of the natural world. He distinguished three categories of the physical world, which are vastness, beauty and usefulness, which are at the same time reflections of the divine attributes of their Creator: power manifested in the vastness of the universe, wisdom manifested in the beauty of the world and goodness expressed in the usefulness of creatures.<sup>6</sup>

1. The first category is *situs* (position, arrangement), which has two dimensions: one is *compositio* (juxtaposition, connection) – that is, the internal unity of the parts in the form constituting a given entity (e.g. the harmonious combination of the parts of the human organism). The other dimension of *situs* is *dispositio* (arrangement, ordering), i.e. the external harmony that adapts one entity in relation to another, spatially and temporally. These are, for example, a bird in the air, a fish in the water or quadrupeds on the ground, while in temporal order it is, for example, the rhythm of the seasons of the day and the year.<sup>7</sup>

2. The second aesthetic category is movement (*motus*), conceived in this context as a simple and intuitive quality, fundamentally related to life. It has four varieties: local, natural, animal and mental. The beauty of these movements constitutes the four sources of aesthetic pleasure. Local movement is, for example, the rippling of green fields, the ebb and flow of waves. Natural movement, on the other hand, is beautiful in its mystery of life – of growth and decay, when, for example, in spring we admire the unfolding of leaves, or the blooming of flowers. On the other hand, we recognise the beauty of animal movement in the sublimity of emotional life or in the stirrings of the senses. The supreme beauty of movement lies in human activity. It is in the creation of concrete works as well as theoretical deliberation, thus: the thoughts of man and the stirrings of his will, the beauty of spiritual life. Human beauty has a different character, it surpasses the level of beauty consisting only in perfect proportion.<sup>8</sup>

3. Another category of beauty termed *species* denotes appearance in so far as the form of a thing is an object of visual perception. This is the beauty expressed in shape and colours. Here, Hugh also admires the beauty of what is rare, unusual, funny or monstrous and ugly, alongside what is perfectly harmonious and repetitive. In both cases, the beauty of the Creator shines forth.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Part two of the treatise is devoted to the realities of the invisible world made known by visible things. While the first part of the work is based on experience and the third on the authority of Scripture, the second part of the treatise is based on reason.

<sup>7</sup> HUGH OF ST VICTOR, *On the Three Days*, 65-69.

<sup>8</sup> HUGH OF ST VICTOR, *On the Three Days*, 69-70; cf. Edgar DE BRUYNE, *Études d'esthétique médiévale*, vol. 2: *L'époque romane* (Bruges: Édition De Temple, 1946), 244-245, 247.

<sup>9</sup> HUGH OF ST VICTOR, *On the Three Days*, 70-73.

4. The fourth aesthetic category, quality (*qualitas*), is important insofar as it introduces the other senses into the aesthetic experience; it is understood as an intrinsic property of things perceived, alongside hearing, with the senses of taste, smell and touch: it is the beauty of sounds, the goodness of tastes, the sweetness of smells and the smoothness of bodies that rejoices the touch.<sup>10</sup>

To sum up this enumeration of the multiple manifestations of beauty, let us use the words of Hugh:

The Creator's providence endowed things with such diverse qualities that every human sense may find its delights. Sight perceives one thing, hearing another, smell another, taste another, touch another. The beauty of colors nurtures sight; the sweetness of song soothes hearing; the fragrance of scent, smell; the sweetness of savor, taste; bodily feel, touch. Who could list all the delights of the senses? Those delights are so manifold in each, that if anyone looks for himself at any one thing, he will think to himself how singularly endowed that thing is.<sup>11</sup>

Speaking of the aesthetics of the Victorian school, it is impossible to omit Hugh's disciple, Richard of St Victor, known especially as a practitioner and theorist of mysticism. In one of his works, *Beniamin Minor*, presenting a hierarchy of contemplative experiences, at the level of contemplation of sensual beauty alone, distinguished seven types of it: 1. The humblest joy and awe comes from the "intellectual" contemplation of matter itself, (the beauty of a marble is different from that of a tree); 2. Then comes the religious-aesthetic consideration of visible forms in the form of shapes and colors; 3. Next, the mind penetrates into the depths of nature, admiring the "deeper" qualities of the other senses, which are manifested in sounds and smells; 4. At a higher level of contemplation of beauty, we watch and admire the actions and works of nature, such as the movement and rhythm of life of a seed developing into a plant, into leaves, flowers and fruits; 5. Further up, we admire human activities and works, especially works of art, and all other fields of human creation, even in agriculture; 6. Further up, we admire institutions, customs, moral laws, customs and secular festivals; 7. At the top of contemplation of the beauty of visible things, Richard places religious ceremonies, such as in solemn liturgies all the formal qualities of beauty come together: the smell of incense, the melody of chants, the twinkling of gold and lights, the shapes and colors of temples, liturgical vestments; the stirrings of intelligence and emotion. In religious ceremonies, beauty is no longer purely sensual

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<sup>10</sup> HUGH OF ST VICTOR, *On the Three Days*, 73.

<sup>11</sup> HUGH OF ST VICTOR, *On the Three Days*, 73.

and formal: it has a deeper meaning, because what the senses perceive in word, gesture, color, lifted by reason, becomes a sign of hidden power.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4. AESTHETICS IN ADAM OF ST VICTOR'S SEQUENCES

Medieval poetics,<sup>13</sup> modeled on classical ideals and Scripture, placed high demands on creators, both in terms of form and content. Poets and theorists of the 12th century paid attention to exquisiteness, faultlessness, perfect finish, appropriateness of expression and also grace and flowery. In his *Sequences*, Adam of St Victor makes excellent use of these tenets of the art of writing (*ars dictaminis*); he achieves appropriate effects by introducing, among other things, as means of expression and ornamentation drawn from the rich aesthetics of the masters of his school – Hugh and Richard. Two sequences, XXXIX dedicated to the Mother of God and XXVI dedicated to the school's patron saint St Victor, are examples of these inspirations.

#### 5. THE BEAUTY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

In the first of these, entitled *Salve Mater Salvatoris*, we find elements of pan-aestheticism, involving all five senses in the experience of beauty.<sup>14</sup> In describing the beauty of the Mother of God, Adam, who had a special devotion to her, using comparisons and associations in depicting her, applies the whole range of Hugh's aesthetic categories, involving all sensory experiences: we have smells and scents of cinnamon, myrrh and frankincense, there is the scent of roses and oils (*nardic*), there are also tastes and sweetness (*incense trees*); in painting effects he includes the category of *species* in relation to colors with their symbolism: white and light expressing purity, gold

<sup>12</sup> Cf. DE BRUYNE, *Etudes d'esthétique médiévale*, 622-624.

<sup>13</sup> Poetry in antiquity was not included among the arts, this was rectified in the Middle Ages by two scholars: half-heartedly Hugh of St Victor, who introduced poetry into the classification of the arts as an "appendage of the arts" to the logical arts (*appendix atrium*), and fully Radulf of Longo Campo (Longchamp, Ardens), who adopted the four divisions of the arts, in addition to philosophy, eloquence and mechanics, and distinguished poetry as an art in the full sense. Cf. TARKIEWICZ, *Historia Estetyki*, 132-135.

<sup>14</sup> Anthropological and epistemological reflection on the five senses has been abundant in Christian thought since antiquity, linking, among other things, to the question of the activity of the soul and the concept of spiritual (inner) senses. Cf. Éric PALAZZO, ed., *Les cinq sens au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Cerf, 2016).

and red, and radiance and fire symbolizing imperishable love. And the words about the “design or material” of the throne of ivory and gold, recall Richard’s first stage of contemplation of the sensual world, that is, admiration for the beauty of matter, its species weight, diversity, solidity.<sup>15</sup> Here are selected excerpts<sup>16</sup>:

<p style="text-align: center;">Closed gate, fountain of gardens, guarded storeroom of spices in your fragrance you are greater than the stalk of cinnamon, myrrh, frankincense and balsam.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">myrthe-tree of temperance, rose of patience, perfumed nard</p> <p style="text-align: center;">flower of the field, singular lily of the valley, Christ from you came out.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">You are the heavenly paradise, and uncut incense, smelling of sweetness.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">You have the fullness of sincerity and honor, of sweetness and parfume.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">You are Solomon’s throne, to whom no throne is equal, in design or material. The white ivory prefigures the mysteries of your chastity, the yellow gold those of your charity.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The light of the virgin, knowing no eclipse, is her chastity; unwaning fire is her immortal charity.</p>
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Adam uses similar motifs in other sequences, where he describes the figure of the Mother of God in terms of the beauty of sunlight, the fragrance of flowers and fruit (sequence XXXIV, *Ave Virgo singularis*).<sup>17</sup> There are repeated pan-aesthetic refined reflections referring to the sensual experience of smells and tastes, for in religious experiences the whole man in his psychophysical unity is to rejoice. In the sequence titled *Lux advenit veneranda*, we have a rich array of sensual pleasures: “Cuius odor lilia/ Cuius vincunt labia/ Favum in dulcedine/ Super vinum sapida,/ Super nivem candida,/ Super rosam rosida,/ Super lunam lucida/ Veri

<sup>15</sup> “Primum itaque contemplationis genus est in consideratione et admiratione rerum corporalium, in omnibus eis que per quinque sensus corporeos ingrediuntur ad animum. Et est quidem hoc omnium infimum, et debet esse incipientium (...). Ad hoc itaque contemplationis genus pertinet omnis admiratio Creatoris quae surgit ex consideratione rerum corporalium,” in Jean GROSFiller, ed., *L’oeuvre de Richard de Saint-Victor*, vol. 1: *De contemplatione (Beniamin maior)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 150.

<sup>16</sup> ADAM OF SAINT-VICTOR, *Sequences*, eds. Juliet Mousseau, and Hugh Feiss (Paris–Leuven–Walpole: Peeters, 2013), 180-181.

<sup>17</sup> ADAM OF SAINT-VICTOR, *Sequences*, 157.



solis lumine.”<sup>18</sup> Similarly, in the sequence *Ave Mater Iesu Christi*: “Fragrans super lilia./ Tibi cedit laus herbarum/ Florum decor et gemmarum.”<sup>19</sup>

## 6. HARMONY IN COMMUNITY LIFE

The second of the aforementioned sequences entitled *Ex radice caritatis* (XXVI), was composed on the occasion of the ceremony of the introduction to the Abbey of the relics of its patron – saint Victor. This piece captures all the depth of the school’s rich program of spiritual formation, which the author expresses in aesthetic terms; the main theme is harmony, which is the goal of man in the individual and social dimensions. In a sequence intended for singing, the various musical allegories used here resound particularly eloquently. With regard to individual formation and the pursuit of human renewal, Adam refers to human music (*musica humana*) and instrumental music (*musica instrumentalis*); these signify the personal harmony of man’s inner self (heart) as well as the harmony of – mutually interacting – body and soul, which, in the fashion of instruments, are to strive for harmonious alignment in friendly “in proper consonance.”<sup>20</sup> And order and peace in the individual life of man are the condition for achieving a harmonious and happy community life. In the social life of the abbey and the Church, the goal is the renewal of customs, the achievement of unity and sweetness of hearts (tuned by the finger of God), on the model of choral melody, the expression and symbol of which is precisely choral singing.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, in accordance with St Augustine’s ideal – “God and the soul I want to know,” the poet points to the high-

<sup>18</sup> ADAM ZE ŚWIĘTEGO WIKTORA, *Sekwencje*, eds. Łukasz Libowski, and Agnieszka Strycharczuk (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Academicon, 2022), 301. I give the Latin version after the Latin-Polish edition because the English edition omits three sequences – as uncertain authorship.

<sup>19</sup> As above, ADAM ZE ŚWIĘTEGO WIKTORA, *Sekwencje*, 297.

<sup>20</sup> “(...) in moral formation aimed at the re-formation of the soul in the image and likeness of God, the Victorins in particular cultivated the pursuit of harmony between inner and outer life. Consequently, a special feature of their ethics as well as their pedagogy is adherence to the principle that the state of the outer life corresponds to the state of the inner life and, vice versa, the «invisible» interior of man shapes what is visible in his physical form. This correspondence between the external and the internal, the visible and the invisible (*per visibilia ad invisibilia*.)” BAJOR, “Pulchrum esse,” 293-309.

<sup>21</sup> Following Boethius (*De musica*, I, 2), three kinds of music were assumed to strive for mutual harmony: music of the spheres (*musica mundana*), instrumental music (*musica instrumentalis*), which is the work of man and his instruments, and its complement – human music (*musica humana*), or the human voice. Cf. Patrice SICARD, “Harmonia między wszystkim i wszystkimi. Ewokacje,” in Adam ze świętego Wiktora, *Sekwencje*, eds. Łukasz Libowski, and Agnieszka Strycharczuk, transl. J. Marcin Janecki (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Academicon, 2022), 42-43.

est goal of human life – God, speaking of the “store-room of the heart,” where we can taste the fragrance and sweetness of Christ, which cannot be found among any earthly pleasures and which distances us from the cares and deceptive tastes of the world. In turn, a harmonious life, customs tuned to the pattern of melody allow us to experience that joy, which already here on earth is a foretaste of paradise. Here are selected excerpts from the analysed sequence:<sup>22</sup>

<p>The organ of our heart, the drum of our flesh, in discord, let harmony rule and join them together in proper consonance.</p> <p>While our choirs sing in harmony, let there be a single melody in our behavior. Grave is the clash of dissimilar voices, dissident morals.</p> <p>From diverse people there will be a cacophony, unless the finger of God first adjusts the strings by his sweet mastery. Unless the sweetness of the spirit touches the depths of the heart, neither the sound of voices nor the exulting of the flesh knows any savor.</p>	<p>This sweetness is not felt in divisions of mind nor is it discovered in the land of the soft-living May the unity of the faithful taste this sweetness and, foretasting, first until it fully grasps it.</p> <p>Let us have a foretaste with the mouth of the heart, that we may be recalled by its internal savor from the seductive love of the world, This is the taste of salvation, this is the unique flavor, through which forgetfulness of secular care grows.</p> <p>So that this world may become bitter, and the odor of Christ become sweet, let this sweetness always increase in the store-room of the heart. Where such a scent breathes, spiritual fervor grows and the delight of temporal life becomes cool.</p>
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## 7. BEAUTY OF THE WORLD

The notion of harmony in Adam’s sequences recalls twelfth-century micro-cosmic theories, which rejected pessimism and opposed depreciation of nature in favor of contemplating its beauty and goodness flowing from the Creator’s hands. Victorian thinkers, headed by Hugh, were particular exponents of this attitude, based on the Neoplatonic idea of the world as a theophany, commonly captured

<sup>22</sup> ADAM OF SAINT-VICTOR, *Sequences*, 117-118.

in the tops of a book written by the hand of God.<sup>23</sup> Inspired by the thought of the school's illustrious masters, Adam draws on aesthetic contemplation of the beauty of nature, and sensitively reaches out to the details of its beauty. In sequence entitled *Mundi renovatio* (XVII) composed for the Octave of Easter,<sup>24</sup> he expresses the joy of overcoming death and liberating us through the Resurrection of Christ. These Easter experiences of regaining "the joy of paradise" are fused with the springtime rebirth of all nature and delight in the miracle of life.

<p>The renewal of the world produces new joys as the Lord rises all things rise together</p> <p>The elements serve and sense how great is the power of their Author.</p> <p>The sky becomes more serene and the sea more tranquil, the breeze moves more gently, our valley flourishes.</p>	<p>Dry things grow green again, cold things become warm again, after spring has begun.</p> <p>The frost of death is brought to an end, the prince of the world is deceived and his empire in us is destroyed.</p>
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In the above excerpts from the sequence, we find echoes of Hugh's delight in the beauty of spring greenery, combined with a spiritual sense of the phenomenon of life reborn in spring:

Finally, there is green, the most beautiful of all. How it enraptures the minds of those who see it, when in a truly new way shoots come forth with new life and standing up in their stalks, which seemed to have been trodden down by death, bud forth together into the light in a symbol of the future resurrection. But what can we say about the works of God, when we admire even their imitations produced by human industry that so deceive the eyes with their artificial beauty.<sup>25</sup>

Adam's phrase "become warm again" captures the image of the Victorian world of harmony and rhythm of the following seasons. We can relate these words to the category of beauty, called *situs*; its second dimension (*dispositio*), consists in the matching of various entities in relation to each other, which Hugh

<sup>23</sup> This is vividly illustrated in a piece by GODFRIED OF ST VICTOR, *Microcosmus*, cf. *L'oeuvre de Godefroid de Saint-Victor*, vol. 1, *Le Microcosme (Microcosmus)*, ed. Françoise Gaspari (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020).

<sup>24</sup> ADAM OF SAINT-VICTOR, *Sequences*, 81.

<sup>25</sup> HUGH OF ST VICTOR, *On the Three Days*, 72-73.

captures in spatial and temporal dimensions (*secundum locum et tempus*) and describes it as follows:

Likewise, just as the alternation of days and nights renews living things, so the four seasons of the year, which succeed one another in order, change the face of the whole world. First, through the gentle warming of spring the earth is reborn with a kind of renewal. Then, through the heat of summer it receives youthful strength. After this, when autumn follows, it reaches maturity. Then, when winter follows, it turns toward decline. However, it always declines so that it can always be renewed after its decline, for unless old things first deteriorated from their condition (as if they were occupying a certain space), new things could not arise.<sup>26</sup>

Among other things, it is the beauty expressed in the rhythm of the day and seasons, which Adam treats in his piece as a happy transition, bringing the joy of nature's rebirth but also the hope of future resurrection.

In the sequences set aside for the Octave of Christmas *Splendor Patris et figura* (V) in describing the characters and qualities of Christ, he used comparisons to a beautiful yet life-giving plant: the leaf signifies the God-given protection given to man, the flower gives a sweet sight and the fruit is food, while the dew symbolizes the gift of God's grace: "The mysteries of the leaf, flower, nut, and dew/ correspond to the mercy of the Savior:/ The leaf is Christ by protecting,/ the flower by sweetness, the nut by nourishment/ the dew by heavenly grace."<sup>27</sup>

The metaphor of the flower was also used by Adam in sequence *Iubilemus Salvatori* (VI), where this time in his contemplation of the newborn God-Man he appeals to the sense of taste and smell: "The wondrous beauty of the flower/ which the plenitude/ of sevenfold grace commends/ Let us be recreated in this flower, which invites us by taste, by smell,/ by sight."<sup>28</sup> The same motif is found in sequence *In excelsis canitur* (VII): "The flower is the boy born for us,/ rightly compared to the flower/ because of his wonderful sweetness,"<sup>29</sup> and in sequence *Virgo Mater Salvatoris* (IX) for the Octave of Epiphany: "The saints run with love/ in the scent of the oils/ because the new vine of Christ/ is fragrant with a new flower."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> HUGH OF ST VICTOR, *On the Three Days*, 67.

<sup>27</sup> ADAM OF SAINT-VICTOR, *Sequences*, 41.

<sup>28</sup> ADAM OF SAINT-VICTOR, *Sequences*, 42-43.

<sup>29</sup> ADAM OF SAINT-VICTOR, *Sequences*, 47.

<sup>30</sup> ADAM OF SAINT-VICTOR, *Sequences*, 55.

## 8. ARTS (CRAFTS): ARCHITECTURE

A specific motif in the sequences is the reference to arts and crafts (*artificia*), especially architecture. In some sequences Adam draws attention to the craftsmanship of the architects and, at the same time, to the beauty and utility of their work. In the sequence *Quam dilecta tabernacula* (XXIV), at the dedication of the church, Adam sings praise and gratitude to its builders: “Quam electi/ architecti,/ tuta aedificia/ Quae non movent,/ immo foveat/ Ventus, flumen, pluvia!”<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, in sequence dedicated to the apostles Peter and Paul entitled *Roma Petro glorietur* (XXX), he refers to architecture to compare them to elements such as foundations and supports, bases, architraves and also interior ornamentation: “These are her foundations/ Founders, supports/ bases, architraves;/ Also, the coverings and curtains/ the blue-colored pelts of the temple,/ the blows, globes, and lilies.”<sup>32</sup>

And in the sequence entitled *Rex Salomon fecit templum* (XXV), the author refers to the symbolism of the temple and the symbolism and beauty of the materials used in the building (stone, marble), which have their place in Victorian contemplation of the beauty of matter: “The foundation of the square temple/ Are marble, the same materials/ The brilliant flower of chastity/ Is the square stone in prelates,/ Their strength and constancy.”<sup>33</sup>

Adam also expresses his admiration for the beauty of the liturgy, also known from Richard’s descriptions of the contemplation of sensual beauty, which, on the way to union with God, is the first stage of mystical experiences. One participates in them by rejoicing not only spiritually, but by savouring the beauty of sensory experience, which symbolises moral beauty.

<p>The cult of the temple Has many facets: Cinnamon, The scent of the house, Myrth, myrth oil, cassia,</p> <p>Which are things that signify The dignity Of good morals And the good sounds Of prayers</p>	<p>In this house All utensils Are gold Drawn from The forechosen treasury,</p>
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<sup>31</sup> ADAM ZE ŚWIĘTEGO WIKTORA, *Sekwencje*, 145.

<sup>32</sup> ADAM OF SAINT-VICTOR, *Sequences*, 135.

<sup>33</sup> Hugh expresses his admiration for the diversity of types of matter in the following words: “Who can spell out the hardness of rocks, the solidity of metals, the knotting of wood, the tenacity of glues?” HUGH OF ST VICTOR, *On the Three Days*, 66.

## 9. A DISTANCE TO THE BEAUTY OF THE WORLD

In Hugh's aesthetic reflection, delight in the beauty of the world is accompanied at the same time by an awareness of its insignificance and the need to distance oneself from sensual experience. The same is expressed by Adam in several places in his works, in sequence *Templum cordis adoremus* (XII), addressing to God, he writes: "All beauty grows dark/ and is disfigured, shudders/ for those who see what is yours./ All flavor becomes bitter,/ is rejected and seems dirty (...). All aroma seems not to give off a good scent/ but to stink, to those who smell/ the sweetness of your scent."<sup>34</sup> In this context, one can read in Adam Hugh's thought about the aesthetics of ugliness, which has, paradoxically, its positive role, because when contemplating ugliness, it is impossible to dwell on it any longer. Physical beauty *de facto* confuses us because it gives us the illusion of possessing perfection, it is static, while ugliness is more 'truthful' because it compels us to desire the Infinite Beauty and awakens a longing beyond the world.<sup>35</sup>

## CONCLUSION

As can be seen from the aesthetic layer of Adam's Sequence from St Victor, he reflects in his work the views of the Victorine school to which he belonged. It is remarkable that so many thinkers and authors belonging to this canonical community, coming from different nations and representing different views in many fields, constituted a harmonious community of life and at the same time formed a coherent school of thought. Ranked among the twelfth-century Renaissance, whose main thrust was humanist ideas, they not only proclaimed these ideas, they lived them, including when they sang the beauty of the world described in their treatises in choral music, praising its Creator with their whole selves – spirit and five senses.

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<sup>34</sup> ADAM OF SAINT-VICTOR, *Sequences*, 65-66.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Dominique POIREL, "The Spirituality and Theology of Beauty in Hugh of St Victor," in *From Knowledge to Beatitude. St Victor, Twelfth-Century Scholars, and Beyond*, eds. E. Ann Matter, and Lesley Smith (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 254.

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## REFLECTIONS OF VICTORIAN AESTHETICS IN ADAM OF ST VICTOR'S SEQUENCES

## Summary

The subject of this article is the aesthetic thought that Adam of St Victor included in his liturgical poetry in the form of a sequence. The content of the article consists of two parts, the first discusses an outline of the aesthetic views of the main masters of the Victorine school, Hugh and Richard, to which Adam belongs, in order to show in the second part how these ideas function in his *Sequences*. In outlining the aesthetic theory, two main ideas of Hugh's are relevant to the *Sequences* under analysis: pan-aestheticism in terms of the inclusion of all five senses (in addition to sight and hearing, these include smell, taste and touch) in

the perception of beauty, and the classification of categories of beauty (laid out in the treatise *De tribus diebus*). The analyses carried out show that Adam of St Victor was a faithful disciple of the school, especially of the master Hugh, and in his writing he drew on the achievements of his illustrious predecessors, as is evident in the range of aesthetic views analysed here.

**Keywords:** aesthetics; sequences; categories of beauty; harmony; senses

## REFLEKSY ESTETYKI WIKTORYŃSKIEJ W SEKWENCJACH ADAMA ZE ŚW. WIKTORA

### Streszczenie

Przedmiotem niniejszego artykułu jest myśl estetyczna, którą Adam ze szkoły św. Wiktora zawarł w swojej poezji liturgicznej w formie sekwencji. Treść artykułu składa się z dwóch części. Pierwsza omawia zarys poglądów estetycznych głównych mistrzów szkoły wiktoryńskiej: Hugona i Ryszarda, do której należy Adam, aby w drugiej części pokazać, jak te idee funkcjonują w jego *Sekwencjach*. Biorąc pod uwagę teorię estetyczną, dwie główne idee Hugona są istotne dla treści omawianych *Sekwencji*: panestetyzm pod względem włączenia w postrzeganie piękna wszystkich pięciu zmysłów (oprócz wzroku i słuchu, także zapach, smak i dotyk) oraz klasyfikacja kategorii piękna (przedstawiona w traktacie *De tribus diebus*). Przeprowadzone analizy dowodzą, że Adam ze św. Wiktora był wiernym uczniem szkoły, zwłaszcza jej czołowego mistrza Hugona. W swej twórczości czerpał z dorobku znamienitych poprzedników, czego przykładem są zarysowane tu wybrane wątki teorii estetycznych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** estetyka, sekwencje, kategorie piękna, harmonia, zmysły