

A SIXTEENTH-CENTURY MEANING OF THE ESCORIAL

A quest for meaning characterizes the thought of this century everywhere in humanistic studies, and it is a quest justified by exploring and mapping old and new terrains of which the resources are still uncertain. The Monastery of Escorial today raises so many questions about the traditional ideas with which we treat the history of art in the sixteenth century, that they are the subject of this paper. It is in four parts: the Escorial as Mannerism; as *estilo desornamentado*; as Renaissance magic; and as an application of the aesthetic system of Saint Augustine.

MANNERIST STYLE AS PSYCHO-HISTORICAL ANALYSIS.

Prior to the 1920's the Escorial was usually classified as a Renaissance monument, but the sixteenth century then came to the surface among historians of art as a separate period in the history of European art, separating the Renaissance of the fifteenth century from the Baroque art of the seventeenth. Thus many now normally designate the Escorial as a "mannerist" building. The term is derived from *maniera*, the pejorative expression used in sixteenth-century Italy to describe the work of the imitators of the principal

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artists of the High Renaissance. Thus Nikolaus Pevsner: “the Escorial... is evidently a monument of the purest Mannerism, forbidding from outside and frigid and intricate in its interior decoration; but it is essentially Italian in style...”¹

But historians of art today are far from unanimous about the Escorial. Manfredo Tafuri, for instance, cannot find in its “gloomy mass... the symbol of the inhibitions expressed in a hallucinatory and introverted Mannerism,” but only “extensions of the... humanistic revolution of the Florentine *Quattrocento*.”² Arnold Hauser, however, claims that the severity and simplicity are:

...nothing but exhibitionist play with puritanism and asceticism. The building displays its “introversion” in a shriekingly ostentatious manner... the hideout of a lonely man withdrawn from the world, and the colossal proportions serve no practical purpose and are nothing but a sham. Philip II lived in his palace like a monk in his cell; the Escorial combines grandeur with exaggerated simplicity in the same mannerist fashion as he did in his way of life.³

In this way the Escorial is “explained” by the supposition that architectural forms necessarily and adequately correspond to identifiable psychic states and types. Yet the visual forms correspond less to individual psychology than to collective traditions in architectural design. The assumed equation between architectural morphology and psychic states has underlain the theory of Mannerism since its first definition in the 1930’s, when the repression by belligerent authoritarian states of the learned world in Italy and Germany led to a search for similar catastrophes in the past and to the selection of the sixteenth century as the “type-specimen.” Hauser’s treatment of Mannerism is an allegorization of what he calls “struggle against the despiritualization of culture.” But Mannerism and culture are both allegorical abstractions and

¹ “The Architecture of Mannerism,” p. 137. His criteria for architectural Mannerism are discordant motifs, contrary directions, alternately exclusive rhythms (e.g. ABBAAB), and contrasting austerity and preciousness. He concludes by admitting “national modifications as a possibility” for sub-classes.

² *L’Architettura del manierismo*, p. 331.

³ *Mannerism*, I, p. 282. Prior to Hauser’s are the remarks by Werner Hager (“Zur Raumstruktur des Manierismus,” p. 138); citing the Escorial as showing “Manneristic introversion” in its plan “hermetically turned inward.”

the “struggle” must be allegorical also, that is, existing less in historical events than in our perception of them.

In Spain too the theory of Mannerism found hospitable ground. José Camon Aznar had earlier named the second or later period of Italian Mannerism in Spain *escurialense*, and *filipino*, but in 1959, he shifted to *trentino*, honouring the Council of Trent (begun late in 1563) in its counter-Reformational work, and choosing the Escorial as its dominant example. He laid stress on the Mannerist “tensions” among its forms, as in the church towers without bases, the obelisks supporting spheres, and the heavy lid-like cornices.⁴ Another Spaniard, Padre Alfonso Rodríguez de Ceballos, S.J., includes José Camon among the theorists of European Mannerism, and he regards Mannerism in architecture as recognizable by visual forms conveying both “emotional distortion” and “self-regulated discipline” (*auto-controlada disciplina*).⁵

If psychic states and architectural forms were thus closely related in the process of design, then architecture as a whole would long ago have been recognized as a dictionary of psychic attitudes. But no such view now seems tenable. Architects continue to explore values peculiar to their craft and to a perpetually changing technology, rather than becoming practitioners of a psycho-diagnostic method of expression. Old buildings still require the historian to discover the values that were intended by their makers.

“ESTILO DESORNAMENTADO” AND PLAIN STYLE AS LABELS.

Carl Justi first used *estilo desornamentado* in a lecture given in Bonn in 1879 to characterize the work of the architects of the Escorial.⁶ It was then a current expression in Spain that Justi brought into use in the history of art. He stressed its negative

⁴ “Arquitectura trentina,” pp. 373 f. and “El estilo trentino,” pp. 421-442; Bonifacio Diez, “El Concilio de Trento y El Escorial,” p. 547, who relates the Catholic purification of Trent to the bare “classic” simplicity of the Escorial, but without introducing Mannerism, and denying the existence of a “Tridentine style” (p. 539).

⁵ *Bustamante*, 1967, p. 111.

⁶ “Philipp II als Kunstfreund,” vol. II, pp. 1-36.

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character as owing to a change of taste following the ornamental richness of the Renaissance in Italy, when Toledo and Herrera, as he says, turned pedantically to Vitruvius and Vignola.⁷

Justi intensely disliked the Escorial: he referred to it as “among the trials of pilgrim art” and as “bitter and bold,” built in haste like Philip’s fortresses in the Old and New Worlds.⁸

Later on, when writing for Karl Baedeker’s guide to Spain, his hostile remarks were expanded, to say that the Escorial was the work of an unchecked will incapable of genius, and of a “repulsive ardour,” beauty or truth, in the absence of freedom.”⁹ Miguel de Unamuno rebutted Justi in 1922 by saying that his criticisms were not aesthetic but political, and that Justi was incapable of enjoying “architectural nudity.”¹⁰

Both Justi and Unamuno were unaware of the prior appearance of such an architecture in Portugal, where it was called “plain style” (*estilo chão*) in the nineteenth century.¹¹ Plain style differs from *desornamentado* by its freedom from academic rules and Italianate forms. In Portugal both the court and the nation had been depleted before the death of Manuel I by his imperial adventure which followed the Age of Discovery. John III (1500-1557), who was Manuel the Fortunate’s son, was, like Philip II, a successor to lessened powers, withdrawn, lonely and frugal, reigning a quarter-century earlier than Philip. As in Spain, military architects were dominant, bringing refractions from Palladio and Vignola, but working in a new and un-Italian diction of minimal ornamentation. Actually, *desornamentado* architecture was later and of shorter duration in Spain than plain style in Portugal which

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16: “It is the style of the learned architects of northern Italy... that seeks effect only through proportional relations, and reduces ornament to its soberest measure according to Roman patterns. It was regarded as a return to the ‘purity of antiquity’, but its diffusion was owing more to a change in taste after the overloaded and painterly ornament of the Renaissance...” Note Justi’s anticipation here of Goller’s theory of “aesthetic fatigue” published in 1887 (note 17). Justi continues: “The negative character of its contribution is characterized by the adjective *desornamentado*... these builders were pedants who could hear only the stiff Latin of their Vitruvius and Vignola.”

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 18.

⁹ Baedeker, *Spain and Portugal*, pp. 109-116, reflecting F. von Schiller’s play of 1787, *Don Carlos*.

¹⁰ Unamuno, in *Andanzas*, pp. 50-51.

¹¹ Julio de Castilho, *Lisboa antiga*, I, p. 144, (written in 1879). Kubler, *Portuguese Plain Architecture, 1521-1706*, pp. 3, 165-171.

persisted until 1706 when John V received new wealth from Brazil.¹² It is also to be noted that Philip II was half Portuguese, reared by Portuguese nurses, speaking Portuguese, and spending over half his reign after 1570 as King of Portugal. Like his cousin John III he felt obliged early in life to correct the extravagance of his father's reign.¹³

In Spain the testimony closest to the King's beliefs about architecture is that of José de Sigüenza, his librarian and humanistic adviser (cf. the Italian city-states), and historian of the building of the Escorial, from 1567 to his death in 1606. His book reflects the ideas of the patron and his architects during its construction. He had no use for Renaissance magic and prophecy; he was a learned scholar of patristic Church writers, especially St. Augustine, and he was thoroughly acquainted with construction and with the problem of deciding how a building should not look.

His position about figural decoration was to prefer plain style and *estilo desornamentado*. Like the cleansing of design from historical ornament in the period 1920-1950, plain style provided a fresh starting point in sixteenth century Portugal and Spain. Sigüenza always speaks with the King's voice on these matters, as well as for many patrons of architecture in Spain after 1560, with whom he shared a distaste for extravagance and ungoverned imagination. It is clearest when he describes as an eye-witness the Manueline monastery of the Jeronimites in Lisbon, which he saw after 1580, while the King was in Portugal with Herrera.

He had seen the work of Diego de Siloe in Granada, and said that though he was then the best architect in Spain, he was unable, "being fond of foliage", to arrive at a good imitation of antiquity, and unable to make a Corinthian order.¹⁴ And of the Manueline monastery of the Jeronimites at Belem near Lisbon, begun in 1497, which he visited and studied in detail, he says: "this modern¹⁵ architecture is always adorned with foliage and figures

¹² Kubler, *Portuguese Plain Architecture*, pp. 3, 6, 170.

¹³ J.M. March, *Ninez de Felipe II*, vol. I, pp. 207-208, letter of 1546 from Prince Philip to Charles V warning him of the coming impoverishment of Spain. On the architectural aspects of his reign in Portugal, Chueca, "El Estilo Herreriano y la arquitectura portuguesa," II, pp. 215-253.

¹⁴ *Historia*, II, 1909, p. 45.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 71. "Modern" at this time and in this context means late medieval gothicizing architecture.

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and mouldings and a thousand impertinent faces. As the stone was hard, its cutting was difficult and cost infinite money and time. The part now finished shows well what I mean. This south facade, and the church... are all marble, full of finials, rainspouts, protrusions, corbels, pyramids and a thousand other foolish things whose names neither I nor the stonecutter can say." Here is the voice of the King, his patron, as when Sigüenza says of the Escorial, reflecting the ideas of the patron and the architects during construction, that "architecture does not consist in being of this order or that one, but in being a well-proportioned body of parts that assist and respond to each other, even though made only of stones cut from the quarry, artfully laid beside and above one another, coming to a whole of good measures and respondent parts."¹⁶

These comments by Sigüenza on the history of architecture in his century clearly allude to the recurrent alternation of phase between rich and simple surfaces, governed by a rule of taste that makes either phase appear distasteful after its products have saturated the available terrain. That rule of taste was studied and identified as *Formermüdung* (aesthetic fatigue) in 1887 by Adolf Göller.¹⁷ E. Gombrich has recently observed that no universal law is present, but only the logic of situations, as when an inflationary "demand for stimulation outruns the capital of inventiveness."¹⁸

RENAISSANCE MAGIC?

If the form and expression of a work of art cannot be defined without an exact knowledge of the controlling intention of its maker, it follows that a wrong understanding of intention deforms all other critical judgements, and that its correct definition is the primary requirement. The hypothesis that Renaissance ideas of magic underlie the design of the Escorial demands testing for its

¹⁶ Unamuno, *Andanzas*, p. 53.

¹⁷ *Zur Ästhetik der Architektur*. Stuttgart, 1887, written when eclecticism was dominant in European architecture, as it was in Spain too during the first half of the sixteenth century, in the coexistence of Gothic, Renaissance, and Moorish forms. G. Kubler, *Shape of Time*, pp. 80-81.

¹⁸ *The Sense of Order*, pp. 212-213.

relevance to the known intention of the builders. A recent iconographic study¹⁹ of selected parts of the Escorial suggests that its building was the expression of aberrant and covert views held by the King and Herrera, who both are alleged as being deeply absorbed in astrology and occult learning, to such a point that Herrera's architectural activities are seen mainly as having "provided a perfect cover"²⁰ for his "occult services," which were "fundamentally astrological and perhaps largely concerned with medicine" rather than architecture.²¹ By this hypothesis it is asked whether Herrera was not "a Magus, a man deeply versed in hermetism and occult lore, who by virtue of this was attached in a special way to the King?"²² It is also claimed that the King was interested in "astrology and the occult,"²³ and that both Herrera and the King were adepts of the philosophy of Ramon Lull (1235-1315) and of the pseudo-Lullian writings that took Lull's name "to spread all kinds of hermetic and occultist tendencies."²⁴

Such an argument also required its author to deny that Sigüenza was credible. He is presented as "the creator of the 'white' legend of Philip II," and his views condemning astrology are dismissed as a "tirade."²⁵ In addition, Sigüenza's claim that he invented the "idea and design" (*invencion y traza*) of the library murals, is discredited as a fantasy.²⁶ Because Sigüenza was hostile to astrology, his credibility as a chronicler had to be questioned by Taylor, who says that Sigüenza²⁷ "was certainly consulted about the program, seeing that he was the librarian of the monastery. He probably did a certain amount of research in connection with it and finished up persuading himself that he was the originator of it all." But Sigüenza also said in the same paragraph of which the closing sentence was quoted above, that he included astrology

¹⁹ Rene Taylor, *Architecture and Magic*, 1967, pp. 81-109.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 85.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 83, 85, 86, 87.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

²⁶ Sigüenza made the claim in his continuation of the *Memorias* by Juan de San Jeronimo, as of 1592 (p. 441), and *Fundacion del Monasterio de El Escorial*, 299: *descubro el intento que tuve cuando puse aqui estas historias*, "I now reveal my purpose when I put these stories here."

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 88, n. 74.

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among the library scenes in order to show the Creator's wish that humans need not fear the influences or constellations of the stars. Over these, prayer and penance exercise a greater power than theirs. This view of Sigüenza's parallels the King's own, as seen below.

Sigüenza also explained his choices on the principle that a royal library must include every taste as a royal table does (*Esta libreria es real, y ha de hallar todos los gustos como en mesa real lo que les asienta*).²⁸ Finally he repeated that the invention and scheme of the library frescoes was his (*la invencion y traza de las historias es mia*) and he noted that the painters sometimes could not follow his wishes, "because the painters did not know enough about the matter," as in the design of the sun clock in *King Hezekiah watching the regression of the sun's shadow*.²⁹ Taylor assumes that Herrera planned the library frescoes, but the only evidence is a drawing by Pellegrino Tibaldi with notations in Herrera's hand (fig. 98). These are solely about the architectural framing of the fresco panel, and have nothing to say about its subject, *Gramatica*, or its interpretation.³⁰

The King's position on astrology confirms Sigüenza's explanations of the frescoes, and Sigüenza's remarks parallel the King's beliefs. As an iconographer, Sigüenza remarks that the value of astrology is denied when it is recalled that the Creator alone knows the names of all the stars, and that humans need not fear their influences and constellations.³¹ The King's own hostility to astrology is related by Baltasar Porreno, his biographer, who should be fully quoted. He says that the King was presented in 1578 with a horoscope by an astrologer at the birth of his son, the future Philip III. The angered King "tore apart the entire book leaf by leaf, saying that they are insane who, with such rash judgments, wish to forestall that of God, and that they are vain and baseless."³² Porreno went on to relate that Philip even

²⁸ FME, p. 289.

²⁹ FME, p. 299.

³⁰ The notes are transcribed by Iniguez, *Trazas*, p. 80. Herrera mentions a *memoria destas historias* as a manuscript which was at that moment either with the King or Francisco de Mora. It has not reappeared anywhere, but it was surely by Sigüenza, who may have published most of it in FME, 281-300.

³¹ FME, p. 299.

³² Porreno, *Dichos*, p. 41-46. Written before 1626 and first published in 1639.

ordered an astrological prophecy to be published, foretelling great evils for a previous year, "in order to prove the emptiness of the author in this manner, as none of the disasters he threatened had happened... and letting it be understood that Christians need take little notice of such forecasters and empty astrologers (*judiciarios*). Porreno also remarks that the King detested superstitions, and that he deliberately acted contrary to them, in matters such as the fear of travelling or doing anything important, like marrying (or being born) on a Tuesday. Like other rulers, however, he encouraged the drafting of horoscopes of divergent forecasts, among which the appropriate ones could be used as needed. As to astrology in general, Sigüenza probably reflected the King's opinion, when he said of the *catarro universal* in 1580 (an epidemic of influenza?) that "our astrologers, who are used to overrating things, did not foresee it in their horoscopes."³³

Another episode, clearly revealing the hostility of the King and Herrera to alchemy, appears in a letter by Herrera (25.VI.1572) to the King. It mentions the pretensions of an alchemist. Herrera writes, "although I take these things about alchemy as a joke... it has seemed I should send your Majesty this memorandum," and the King replies in the margins that he too "takes, and has always taken, alchemy as a matter for joking," and that the alchemist's papers should be returned to him.³⁴

Both Herrera and the King were orthodox collectors and students of the works of Ramon Lull, like many other well educated Spaniards. As collectors they inevitably were offered, and acquired for the library of the Escorial, many pseudo-Lullian writings of doubtful orthodoxy. Herrera's interest was limited to certain mathematical aspects of Lull's *Arte Magna*, as exemplified both in his architectural designs and in his theoretical writings. The King's interest in the beatified *Doctor Illuminatus* was probably based on the Catalan's avowed purpose to convert Moslems to Christianity.³⁵ Lull died as a martyr returning from his mission to Africa. The *Ars Lulliana* itself was a combinatorial method for categorizing all possible ideas, that Herrera applied in his

³³ FME, pp. 95-96.

³⁴ IVDJ, unnumbered, *legajo*, labelled *libros*, f. 261. Full text in Appendix.

³⁵ M. Cruz Hernandez, *Lull*, Madrid, 1977, pp. 43-50. On Lull and Philip II, pp. 326-327.

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Discurso de la figura cubica.³⁶ It bears no trace of hermetism or occultism, nor does any other writing by Herrera, although both he and the King collected all works related in any way to Lullianism, as humanists concerned with an admired literary *oeuvre*.³⁷

In sixteenth-century Europe, "magic" still conveyed the late Latin and Greek meanings of *magica* or *ars*, and *magike* of *techne*, equivalent to technical crafts. Only after 1600 were the modern cognates to become common as *magie* (French) or *magia* (Italian, Spanish, Portuguese), both adopted from Greek *mageia* formed on *magos*, whence *magus* or magician. Thus until 1600 in Spain, the word *magia* still meant "natural magic", i.e. that which did not need recourse to the "agency of personal spirits." It was usually recognized in the Middle Ages as a legitimate department of study and practice, as long as it was not employed for maleficent ends as in the "black magic" of modern writers. As "natural magic" medieval writers sometimes meant the making of an image under selected astrological conditions, in order to affect the health of the person represented, as well as applying a medication to a weapon in order to heal the wound made by it. But usually, "natural magic" comprised processes adapted to the laws of physical causation.³⁸

On review, the effort to find a division in sixteenth-century knowledge between rational processes and occult practices, seems unnecessary. It disappears when the entire spectrum of the received knowledge of the age is surveyed, as by Michel Foucault.³⁹ He

³⁶ Julio Rey Pastor, ed., Madrid, 1935 (facsimile of the manuscript in the Escorial library).

³⁷ Lullian scholars today believe that the presence of more than 100 Lullian items in Herrera's library of 400 volumes, means that this important collection was made to be deposited in the library of the Escorial, because it was not to be sold after his death on 15.1.1597, by order of the executors of his will, of whom one was the King's keeper of jewels (J. Carreras y Artau, "El Lullisme de Juan de Herrera," pp. 41-60; T. and J. Carreras y Artau, *Historia*, II, 258-263; 263-267; A. Ruiz de Arcaute, *Herrera*, 141). In the opinion of the brothers Artigas Artau, Herrera followed the Lullian scholarship of an older generation in the reign of the Catholic Kings, especially Cisneros, and the librarian Dimas de Miguel, who detested scholasticism but accepted the humanistic orientation of Lullian scholarship in Paris among the Neo-Platonists, such as Lefevre, Bouvelles, or Lavinheta, whose printed works were in Herrera's library (Artigas, "Lullisme," p. 19).

³⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary, Compact edition*, 1971, s. v. "magic".

³⁹ *Les Mots et les choses*, Paris, 1966.

regards the epistemological framework of the sixteenth century as one where *Divinatio* and *Eruditio* were hermeneutically identical, because of their mutual dependence on the theory of resemblances for an understanding of signs of all kinds, from Stoicism to the seventeenth century.

Divination and erudition remained inseparable for as long as knowledge consisted of interpretations about previous utterances, instead of experimental demonstrations and proofs of new hypotheses. The medieval principle of similitude, which was supreme in the mental life of Europe throughout the Middle Ages, found its widest expression via the printed word during the sixteenth century.

The four similitudes that were recognized as organizing knowledge until 1600 were *convenientia* (or the chain of resemblances in space); *aemulatio* (or similitudes by replication, mirroring, and rivalry in linked duplications); *analogia* (or the reversible joinings of *convenientia* and *aemulatio* with mankind as the center); and *simpatia* (or the convergences of sameness, which are opposite to antipathy). Taken together, sympathy and antipathy form the sovereign principle of similitude.

Since every resemblance requires a sign for recognition, making likeness visible, further interactions are between sympathies and emulations, that mark analogies. Emulation is marked by analogy, which in turn is a sign of sympathy. Likewise *convenientia* (or proximity) is known by emulation, and sympathy is a sign of the same “convening”.

In this tangle of sign and content, divination was an integral part of knowledge. The concept of magic was inherent in the sixteenth century in knowledge itself, and more equivalent to erudition than in rivalry to it. Taylor rightly sees *magia* in Renaissance texts as “in no sense restricted to demoniacal magic,” but he surely errs in viewing the King and Herrera as covert adherents of Hermetism and occultism, and in suggesting without proof that Herrera was a magus performing “occult services for his master.”

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SIGÜENZA, THE ESCORIAL AND THE AESTHETICS OF AUGUSTINE.

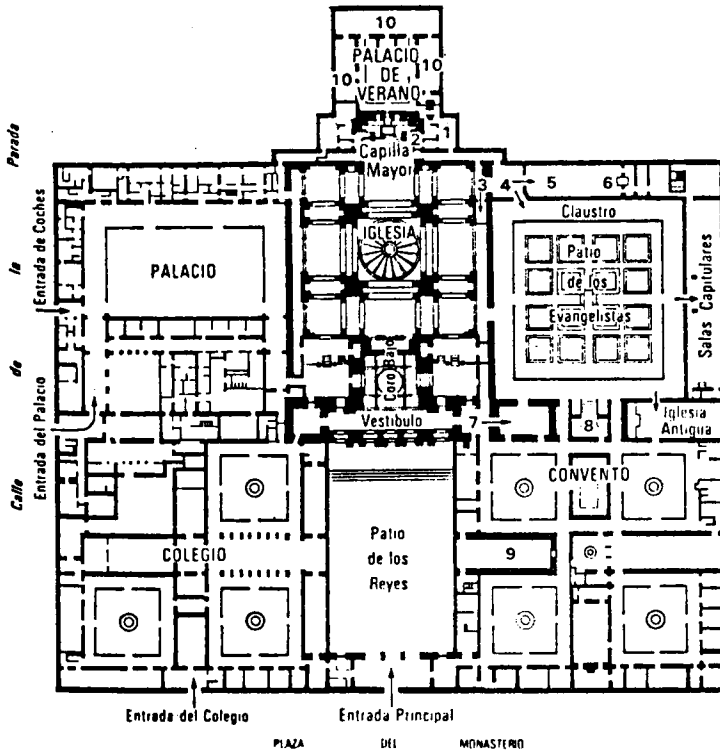
Fray José de Sigüenza (1544-1606) was not only the historian, but also the librarian of the Escorial. Born out of wedlock in Sigüenza, he took refuge at the age of 12 in the Jeronymite monastery at El Parral, going on to university studies in Sigüenza. In 1565 he attempted without success to join the Spanish fleet setting forth from Valencia to relieve Malta. Returning to El Parral, his first profession as a Jeronymite was there in 1567. He later said that he had seen at the Escorial "the opening of most of its foundations, the closing of the arches, the covering of the vaults, the finishing of the pinnacles and domes, and the raising of the crosses on the highest spires."⁴⁰ This passage suggests that even as a novice before 1567 at El Parral, Sigüenza had been coming to the Escorial often enough to claim authority as an eye-witness to most of its construction, and learning about architecture from its builders. During the years before the community could occupy the Escorial, Sigüenza lived in the college at Parraces, travelling to the Escorial as professor and preacher, in the years of his early literary work. At the Escorial he succeeded Benito Arias Montano as librarian, iconographer and keeper of relics, becoming professor a second time in 1590 as was customary in order to be recognized as a full member of the community there.⁴¹ As librarian, in the 1580's, he planned the programs, not only of the cycle of frescoes in the library, but also of the fountain of the Evangelists in the main cloister garden. He also composed the Latin texts (at the King's request) to accompany Monegro's statues of the biblical Kings on the façade of the basilica. His history of the Jeronymite order appeared in 1600 and 1605. M. Menendez Pelayo ranked him with Miguel de Cervantes and Juan de Valdes among the foremost Spanish writers of that

⁴⁰ FME, p. 7. The source for his biography is the *Elogio* by Juan Catalina García, written in 1897, and published in the second edition of Sigüenza's *Historia*, vol. 1, pp. v-111.

⁴¹ Between the two professions in 1567 and 1590 few dates are known. He wrote an *Instrucción de maestros y escuela de novicios* in 1580, and a life of St. Jerome, published in 1595. The *Instrucción* did not appear in print until 1712, and it was reprinted in 1973. Occasional poems by him appeared in 1584 and 1597.

- 1 Philip II's apartment
- 2 Philip II's oratory
- 3 Entrance to the Pantheon
- 4 Outer Sacristy
- 5 Sacristy

- 6 Small Chamber
- 7 Hall of Secrets
- 8 The Grand Staircase
- 9 Manuscript Library
- 10 New Museums



period,⁴² on the evidence of the *Historia* as an example of *estilo llano*, that parallels the *estilo desornamentado* of the building he chronicled. He became Prior of San Lorenzo in 1604. His two-part treatise on the Escorial, divided as monastic history and architectural analysis, first printed in 1605, was probably written after 1590.

⁴² *Historia de las ideas esteticas en Espana*, II, p. 423.

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As professor, librarian and historian of his order, Sigüenza was familiar with the works of Saint Augustine (A.D. 354-430), under whose monastic rule the Jeronymite order was founded in 1374. While librarian, Sigüenza catalogued, in his own hand, forty manuscripts attributed to Augustine in the library of the Escorial. Among them was one, *De Baptismo parvulorum*, which was then believed to be the oldest work in the Escorial, and written in Augustine's hand.⁴³ It was in the King's own collection, and Sigüenza asked the King how he knew the manuscript was in Augustine's hand. The King replied that he had heard it from his aunt who had given it to him as a valued relic, together with an *Apocalypse*. The latter Sigüenza dated as no older than the fourteenth century, although the King believed it belonged to St. John Chrysostom.⁴⁴

Sigüenza's special knowledge of Augustinian aesthetics appears in his history of the Escorial throughout the second part, in the architectural analysis of the parts of the building. and at length in the discourse on the basilica.⁴⁵ This section provides a key to the entire preceding analysis that fills Book III of the *Historia*. It provides the reader with an explanation of the Augustinian concepts and terms that reappear throughout the earlier analysis of the building.

Sigüenza cited two treatises by Augustine: *De ordine*, written in 386, is his most substantial contribution to aesthetic ideas. *De vera religione* (c. 400) alludes to the principal themes of Augustine's aesthetic position.⁴⁶ *De ordine* is about God's authorship of the order of the universe: God loves order and is its creator. The universe is one and its beauty is God's. The Augustinian aesthetic system, however, is limited to the domains of sight and hearing, where pleasure can transcend utility. In the visible world, the most beautiful proportions are in architecture and dance. In sound they are found in consonance and rhythm. Common to both domains is the Pythagorean

⁴³ FME, p. 307. Sigüenza's catalogue of the Latin manuscripts was printed by G. Antolin (*Catálogo de los códices latinos*, vol. V, 1923, pp. 331-512). The manuscripts of Augustine's works appear on pp. 345-347.

⁴⁴ FME, pp. 307-308.

⁴⁵ FME, pp. 202-352; *Discurso XII*, pp. 321-323.

⁴⁶ Svoboda, *L'Esthétique de Saint Augustin*, pp. 20-48; 102-114.

explanation, peculiar to mankind, of beauty as number. The fine arts are the work of reason under the guidance of various disciplines, as when poetry is judged by grammar. By reason again, the soul knows divine beauty without the aid of the senses, for the world is only a dim reflection of that beauty.

J. Rief,⁴⁷ who places Augustine's thought about *ordo* at the center of the theme of ascent to God, fixes Augustine's concern with aesthetics as the objective part of the philosophy of personal ascent driven by the love of God through different layers of reality towards knowledge of the absolute. Such aesthetic thought is in his view a minor part of the total scope of Augustine's philosophy, embedded as it is among activities of seeking and finding truth, achieving faith, attaining love, and constructing a theology of history.⁴⁸

De vera religione is about Platonic beauty contemplated only by spirit and existing unchanged everywhere. It is manifested in the human body given by God, and in every other creature by concord and peace among the parts. Sin does not spoil the beauty of creation, which is safeguarded by punishment, the trial of the just, and the perfection of the blessed in heaven. Authority and reason are the conditions of the knowledge of beauty and its judgment.

This treatise also contains a dialogue with an architect about the correspondences of arches built to face each other. Augustine asks whether they are beautiful because they please, or whether they please because they are beautiful. The architect replies that correspondence is beautiful because of similitude and harmony. And Augustine adds that their beauty is incomplete, for if it were complete, they would cease to appear as bodies, which can only feign unity with God. Thus Augustine affirms that pleasure is a consequence but not a cause of beauty, and that the cause lies in the unity, harmony and equality of God. Here Augustine also rejects the curious illusions of magicians, actors, and poets, in favor of the Scripture that corresponds to the law and the truth.

As Svoboda concludes,⁴⁹ the aesthetic system of Augustine is

⁴⁷ *Ordobegriff*, p. 362, A. Schopf.

⁴⁸ *Augustinus*, 1970.

⁴⁹ *L'Esthétique de Saint Augustin*, pp. 199-200.

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the most complete to have been transmitted from antiquity. It still has great interest today because of its formalist base; its idea of organic unity; the opposition of sensing and meaning in works of art; the study of rhythmic classes; and the analysis of emotion and aesthetic judgment. His eclectic synthesis of Greco-Roman aesthetic ideas is adapted to Judaeo-Christian needs by identifying God with Plato's supreme idea, by placing a high value on moral allegorization, and by a mistrust of theater and the figural arts of painting and sculpture. This aversion characterized early Christian sensibility, as explored first by Alois Riegl in his pages on Augustinian aesthetic thought and late Roman art.⁵⁰

Riegl was among the first to understand the relevance of Augustine's aesthetics to late-antique expression. He stressed Augustine's youthful inclination to dwell empirically on specific objects and experiences of aesthetic significance.⁵¹ Important to him was Augustine's recognition of the interdependence of beauty and its absences. Central to his own theories was the confirmation from Augustine of the positive value of non-material forms such as window-openings (*perforatis*), in rhythmic combinations, in contrast to Aristotle's preferences for solid forms. Riegl also related the thought of Augustine to late-antique forms in thermal and basilical architecture.

Sigüenza anticipated the rediscovery of the aesthetics of Augustine with his analysis of the Escorial, and the views of Augustine are present in the work from beginning to end. For instance, Augustine's thoughts about concord and peace among the parts of the human body appear in the *Prólogo* as part of the discussion of architecture, but Sigüenza properly cites Galen, whom Poseidonius, Augustine's source, followed.⁵² Sigüenza begins by sketching the purpose and meaning of the Escorial as being

a collection of all the great qualities that have been celebrated as such in the course of the centuries, leaving out every superfluous thing and all that serves only ambition and display. Thus those who see the building as I portray it here, and as it is represented entire, will also see the abundance, proportion, commodity, relation

⁵⁰ *Spätromische Kunstindustrie*, I, 1901; re-edition Vienna, 1927, pp. 393-400.

⁵¹ E. Chapman, *St. Augustine's Philosophy of Beauty*, p. 1, on Augustine's empiricism as always beginning from concrete experience.

⁵² FME, pp. 5-6; Svoboda, *Esthétique*, p. 42.

and utility of its parts, like Galen, who read much divine wisdom in such harmony and correspondence, and affirmed that he had written a book of the praises of God. And he who well observes the parts of this monastery may say that it is an excellent translation of the same divine wisdom.

The first part of Sigüenza's book about the Escorial is historical, recounting its foundation and building.⁵³ The second part is descriptive, analytical, and pedagogic, and arranged by *Discursos*, beginning with the façades, entering the west portico, proceeding through the cloisters and college to the King's house, returning to the library and the basilica and sacristies. Sigüenza treats the reader as a beginner unfamiliar with architecture, introducing him gradually to its terms and practices; explaining the parts of churches and the nature of the classical orders; slowly acquainting him with the remarkable novelty in Spain of the severe style of the Escorial; and using constantly in different contexts such Augustinian terms as equal, similar, congruent, harmonious, concordant and correspondent, in respect both to form and meaning.

Discurso XII describes the fabric and decoration of the basilica. Here, near the end of the architectural analysis, Sigüenza begins a compact discussion of Augustinian aesthetics:

One of the great beauties of this building is seen in how all its parts imitate one another, and how much the whole is in all the parts. The building which fails to keep this order shows the poor resources and understanding of its architect, in not having bound together or unified the whole body. What we call correspondence is none other than the right reason of art... with the authority not alone of Vitruvius... but that of the divine Augustine, doctor of the church, who, as a man of high genius, wished, among a thousand other matters of learning found in his books, to touch also on this of correspondence in architecture.⁵⁴

In this way Sigüenza marks Augustine's place over Vitruvius

⁵³ In the manuscript version (pre-publication) in the Escorial Library, and in the first two editions (1600-1605 and 1907-1909), the part entitled "De la Fundacion del Monasterio" is Book III of the *Historia de la Orden de San Jerónimo*, and the second part, "De las partes del edificio" is Book IV.

⁵⁴ FME, p. 321.

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in the minds of those concerned with building the Escorial, and he continues to review the history of Spain and the position of the King:

As Spain had lost the habits of the fine arts in the savagery and wildness of the war against the Moors... people were astonished to see preserved here [at the Escorial] so much correspondence in architecture, and believed that it was only the taste or inclination of King Philip, or an idle curiosity, that wherever a door or window appeared, another should respond to it... Thus we may say that this Prince, as we learn from Saint Augustine, returned us to reason and made us notice that the arts contain reason both in themselves and in the proportion they make with our souls.⁵⁵

Sigüenza clearly declares here that the explicit aim of the enterprise of the Escorial was to effect a rebirth of architecture on Augustinian principles under the King's aegis.

Another section, Bk. 2, 1, cites *De ordine*. Sigüenza quotes Augustine, who is inside looking out, as follows, on the arrangement of windows:

In this building where we stand, if we look closely at each part, it cannot fail to offend when a doorway on one side is unevenly matched on the other side with one placed at random... This is because in buildings where necessity makes no forcible demand, the poor proportion of the parts gravely offends our sight. But when on an inner wall three windows appear, one in the center and two equally spaced at its sides, the entering sunlight is evenly distributed, and their sight is a joy... for it is a certainty that the soul is drawn to them.⁵⁶

Elsewhere Sigüenza quotes from *De vera religione*, Bk. 1, ch. 30, where Augustine writes also on music, dance and poetry, the following passage on architectural intervals:

Reason is when we ask or consider, seeing two unequal windows placed side by side, why they offend us, although the same windows one above the other, or even on the same level, would not be repugnant. And why is it that they do not offend or

⁵⁵ FME, pp. 322-323.

⁵⁶ FME, p. 322.

appear bad, when being unequal, they are arranged in a perpendicular column?⁵⁷

Further on Augustine adds (in Sigüenza's extract):

In all the arts, correspondence and agreement give pleasure, and when they are present, all is beautiful, for correspondence loves unity and equality, whether in the likeness of equal parts, or by the gradation and ordering of unequal parts.⁵⁸

Sigüenza later turns to the small courtyards (*patinejos*) behind the towers of the church.

Whoever sees them will find well set forth what Saint Augustine teaches, that the very nature of mankind, and the reason with which he is endowed, compose between them a great harmony, for both are filled with beauty. This harmony matches the light of understanding and the seeds of the sciences placed in man by the Creator, as the highest unity and equality that the sainted Doctor seeks in his book, in order that from the architecture beheld by sight may arise other thoughts more abundant and worthy of harvest by mankind.⁵⁹

This splendidly mixed metaphor concludes Sigüenza's discourse on Augustinian aesthetics. He knew the principal points of Augustine's position, and like Augustine, he was vividly aware of aesthetic qualities and problems. His treatment of them, though compact, is centuries ahead of his time, defining Augustinian aesthetics as a topic that would not be understood so clearly again until the works of Riegl and Svoboda. In the process Sigüenza linked Augustine with Philip II and the Escorial in a systematic and credible way, implying that a resurrection of Augustinian ideas about architecture was present, rather than a pagan renaissance.

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⁵⁷ FME, p. 322.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ FME, 323.

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