

JUAN GIL-ALBERT AND JORGE GUILLÉN:  
THE APOLLONIAN AND THE DIONYSIAN  
MODES IN CONTEMPORARY SPANISH POETRY

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While Jorge Guillén needs no introduction to those interested in contemporary Spanish poetry, Juan Gil-Albert has remained largely unknown outside of Spain until fairly recently. In the past ten years he has received increased critical recognition, and in 1984 was honored in an homage dedicated to him. He has become recognized as a principal proponent of Mediterranean culture<sup>1</sup>.

Gil-Albert's emphasis on the Mediterranean tradition is one of several characteristics he shares with Jorge Guillén. It should not be surprising that Gil-Albert has much in common with Guillén in view of their similar aesthetic development. In an introduction to his first collection of poetry, *Misteriosa presencia*, Gil-Albert presents what he feels to be a proper perspective on his place in poetic tradition:

El que mi primer libro de versos... lo publicara Altolaguirre en sus ediciones Héroe, en el 36, casi coincidiendo con el estallido de la guerra civil, ha obligado a los antologistas a sumarme a la generación que responde a ese mismo año, siendo así que, por nacimiento, por formación, por estilo e incluso por mi amistad estrecha con muchos de sus componentes, mi lugar

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<sup>1</sup> See Francisco Brines' excellent study of how Gil-Albert's Mediterranean heritage is manifested in his works. Leopoldo Azancot also stresses the importance of Greco-Roman culture in Gil-Albert's work.

está junto a la generación anterior que se ha convenido en denominar con la fecha del 27 —alguien me designó, con mi beneplácito, de poeta-isla— (1, 7).

Gil-Albert could be referring to José Santamaría, who discusses his place in twentieth century Spanish poetry in some detail and concludes that it is best to consider him independently from any particular poetic generation (125-126). Gil-Albert achieved his unique poetic voice with the publication of *Las ilusiones con los poemas del convaleciente* in 1944. In this work and in all that follow, he most forcefully reveals his struggle to resolve the two most significant, opposing cultural currents in his past: The Judeo-Christian and the Greco-Roman (see Azancot's study). His preference for the latter tradition is obvious. His feeling of affinity for Greek culture, and especially his interest in the Pre-Socratic philosophers, are points in common with Jorge Guillén. Prof. Willis Barnstone has noted the significance of the Pre-Socratic philosophers in Guillén's poetic imagery, particularly in his use of a philosophical vocabulary of abstractions in order to speak of concrete objects in the world (19-24).

Gil-Albert has a collection of seven poems titled *A los presocráticos* (in vol. 2 of the *Obra poética completa*), in which each of the poems is dedicated to a different Presocratic philosopher. In his case, however, the relationship between the abstract and the concrete is developed in inverse process to that just mentioned in Guillén's poetry. Beginning with *Las ilusiones*, we may observe that Gil-Albert often develops the ontological question through imagery taken from the natural world. Thus, idea is embodied in imagery.

In addition to their affinity for the Greek world, Gil-Albert and Guillén share a basically optimistic philosophy of life, which is rooted in each case in concrete reality<sup>2</sup>. Guillén critics have all largely agreed upon his positive outlook, that emerges ultimately even

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<sup>2</sup> Most critics have insisted on Guillén's poetry as being rooted in concrete reality, despite the fact that this reality is transformed into the work of art. See especially Debicki, *Estudios...*, 131. As Debicki also states in his book on Guillén: «Dos planos se enfrentan y se modifican mutuamente; de las semejanzas y las diferencias entre ambos surge una nueva perspectiva, una nueva visión de la realidad» (129). See also p. 144 for how the symbol functions in Guillén. See also Grant MacCurdy (83), Casaldueiro (96) and González-Muela's important study.

in his least optimistic collection, *Clamor*<sup>3</sup>. In Gil-Albert's works from *Las ilusiones* onward, the *himno* is frequent in titles of individual poems, for example, in the opening poem, «Himno al ocio», a key poem to understanding his aesthetic attitudes. Like Guillén's, Gil-Albert's optimism is an affirmation of life despite its evils rather than a form of escapism that seeks to ignore the existence of obstacles.

While Guillén and Gil-Albert share a predilection for Mediterranean culture and the desire to celebrate life in their poetry, however, they differ profoundly in their poetic expression. This difference is manifested particularly in the way in which their imagery functions and it is this fundamental difference that will be examined in the present study.

Both Guillén's and Gil-Albert's poetic expression is at least partially the result of an aesthetic attitude that has its basis in Greek art. In his early work *The Birth of Tragedy*, Friedrich Nietzsche makes the distinction between two primary opposing modes of expression which combine to create Greek tragedy: the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Apollonian expression emphasizes purity of line and form, balance, order and tranquility, and is closely connected with the plastic arts. Dionysian expression, on the other hand, is characterized by unbridled passion that leads to chaos, often resulting in self-annihilation. It is best symbolized in a cycle of destruction and recreation, and is closely associated with music<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Gustavo Correa notes the importance of the word *cántico* itself as the life title of Guillén's major work (122-123). González-Muela notes that Guillén's optimism is not superficial, and that he cannot be considered an «ostrich» (24). Biruté Ciplijauskaitė also emphasizes Guillén's optimism (39, 41-43, 45), as does Curtius (209), who sees this optimism as contrasting radically with much of twentieth century literature. Couland finds that despite Guillén's awareness of the passage of time, he has a positive outlook (182). Grant MacCurdy sees *Homenaje* as a reaffirmation of the values of *Cántico* (147), and Eugenio Frutos calls Guillén's «optimism» «existencialismo jubiloso» in his study.

<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche contrasts the Dionysian and the Apollonian modes most specifically on 45-55. He also relates the Greek chorus in tragedy to the union of two modes of expression (55-63), and he elucidates how both function in Greek tragedy as a whole (68-69). MacCurdy notes the influence of Nietzsche in Spain at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, especially his idea of conscious clarity through art, relating it to Salinas in particular (41). It seems highly probable that Guillén was also affected by Nietzsche's thought as well, at least that pertaining to aesthetics.

While I do not wish to imply that either Guillén or Gil-Albert were influenced by Nietzsche's ideas on Greek tragedy, I do believe that an examination of what may constitute Apollonian and Dionysian expression is a useful means to understanding the basic differences in the way in which their imagery functions.

It is appropriate at this point to relate the Apollonian and the Dionysian modes of expression to the two poets in an attempt to discern how Gil-Albert's Dionysian poetry ultimately diverges from that of some poets of '27 and is, in fact, a precursor to the poetry of more recent generations. If we relate the Apollonian mode of expression, as does Nietzsche, to a search for harmony, perfect beauty and permanence, we may see that much of the poetry of the Generation of '27, especially that of Guillén, results from the desire to achieve those very qualities mentioned. It is an expression of the will to timelessness through eternalizing a given moment<sup>5</sup>. What emerges is a universal reality which is a synthesis of the concrete world with the poet's vision of it as revealed in the poem. This is, of course, the reality that is revealed in Guillén's poetry, as Debicki and other critics have noted.

In contrast to the Apollonian mode of expression, the Dionysian may be interpreted as the result of a desire to break existing patterns of order and to become an integral part of the life cycle of creation, destruction and recreation. In the Dionysian world, there is nothing permanent, all is subject to change, and the threat of nothingness is ever imminent. While the desire for perfect order and beauty may exist, and while the poet may wish that it were possible to achieve timelessness through eternalization of the present, he realizes that this is impossible, and he is forced to recognize the necessity of destruction and chaos in the continuing life cycle. The reality that emerges in Gil-Albert's poetry is one in which balance and order are quite fragile and momentary, always subject to change and dissolution. Thus, the joy expressed in his poetry may seem all the more intense with the knowledge that it is fleeting.

With regard to imagery, in Guillén's poetry the image is presented at the exact moment of its perfection and completion. Casaldueiro refers to this as «un estado latente de inminencia» (48). The moment preserved is usually one in which life seems at its zenith, for example,

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<sup>5</sup> Casaldueiro emphasizes the importance of form to creation in Guillén's poetry: «... la creación concluye en la forma ...» (36).

at high noon or in the case of an art object, when it has been immortalized into an unchangeable state. In Gil-Albert's poetry, however, the image often conveys a notion of rupture, or beauty in the last moments before its destruction. Whereas in Guillén's poetry the emphasis is on capturing movement and perhaps arresting or containing it so as to create a sense of the immortal, in Gil-Albert's poems, poetic flow and movement of line are not contained and the illusion of permanence is thereby broken.

In both Guillén and Gil-Albert, we may note the interplay between order and chaos, form and formlessness, but we will see that whereas in Guillén's poems order ultimately arises out of chaos, and the tension between the two is balanced in favor of order, in Gil-Albert's poems, order is at best precarious, and the imagery suggests its imminent rupture. In Guillén's well-known poem «Naturaleza viva», for example, while the wild living freedom of the former tree is still vividly present in the veins of the wooden table, that freedom is contained within the limits of its form:

#### NATURALEZA VIVA

¡Tablero de la mesa  
Que, tan exactamente  
Raso nivel, mantiene  
Resuelto en una idea

Su plano: puro, sabio,  
Mental para los ojos  
Mentales! Un aplomo,  
Mientras, requiere al tacto,

Que palpa y reconoce  
Como el plano gravita  
Con pesadumbre rica  
De leña, tronco, bosque

De nogal. ¡El nogal  
Confiado a sus nudos  
Y vetas, a su mucho  
Tiempo de potestad

Reconcentrada en este  
 Vigo inmóvil, hecho  
 Materia de tablero  
 Siempre, siempre silvestre! (50)

This poem is one of many in *Cántico* that may be said to demonstrate the Apollonian mode of expression, in which perfect harmony and beauty are represented in plastic form and in the line. The life contained in the veins of the wood adds to the power of its beauty, just as the perfection in the depiction of the human body adds to the power of many Greek statues. Despite the speaker's wish to emphasize the wild, living expression in the wood, what actually triumphs is the tree transformed through art, into the table top. Notwithstanding the final line of the poem, the language of the entire final stanza (*reconcentrada, vigor, inmóvil, materia de tablero*) suggests contained, unchanging form<sup>6</sup>. Thus, while I would not dispute González-Muela's insistence upon the dynamic nature of Guillén's poetry, nor the fact that there is motion, even in the most static of poems in *Cántico* (113), I see that motion as necessarily fixed within the limits of unchanging form. One might even speak paradoxically of the limits of timelessness imposed upon the object, impervious to destruction because of its transformation through art. This is what I perceive to represent the fundamentally Apollonian expression of Guillén's poetry.

It is also quite evident that the language and the imagery of the poem display Guillén's tendency to unite the sensorial and the conceptual levels of the poem through the imagery, a characteristic that Debicki has discussed in detail (*Estudios*, 128-153). This very tendency is partly responsible for the Apollonian harmony and order in his poetry, and it is, as we shall see, one way in which Gil-Albert differs fundamentally from him.

In contrast to Guillén's poetry, where the sensorial and the con-

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<sup>6</sup> It is significant that Ricardo Gullón refers to the Dionysian when contrasting Guillén's type of joy to it: «There is no Dionysiac drunkenness but, rather, a brilliant drunkenness, an exaltation produced by the realization that life is possible. In and of itself life has value; ...» (115). Gullón also notes that Guillén overcomes the threat of pure passion (116). Rather than to refer to Guillén's joy as a «brilliant drunkenness», which seems too similar to «Dionysiac drunkenness» to constitute much of a contrast to it, I would accept Ivar Ivask's definition of Guillén's attitude as «entusiasmo controlado» (37), which has its basis in his Classicism.

ceptual levels of the imagery function simultaneously and in accord, in Gil-Albert's poetry, the conflict between these two levels is often the basis for the tension of the poem, a tension that is rooted in the Dionysian mode of expression. A poem which illustrates this tension is «Las granadas» from *Las ilusiones*:

Cuando todo parece ensombrecido,  
 la luz se va y un raro privilegio  
 mantiene sobre el rostro de la tierra  
 un blanco resplandor, el hombre entonces,  
 5 con un sagrado espanto, ve perderse  
 las joviales corrientes de la vida  
 y entornando su corazón se vuelve  
 hacia las viñas donde está sumido  
 todo el zumo letal de la existencia  
 10 y allí dirige el culto de sus días  
 porque quiere vivir y allí se escucha  
 un tumulto adorable. Y cada año,  
 alguna criatura extraviada  
 por los caminos donde el polvo dulce  
 15 campea el horizonte, se detiene  
 ante un mísero árbol que no puede  
 soportar la fatiga de sus frutos.  
 Son las granadas plenas de hermosura  
 y oscuridad naciente, allí colgadas,  
 20 en aquella pobreza. Cual joyeles  
 desenterrados, quedan en sus cuerpos,  
 en sus graves coronas, restos fríos  
 de la tierra pasada y hay algunas  
 que están resquebrajadas por el aire  
 25 y en su interior refulgen. ¡Raras sombras!  
 Apenas si las come alguien que pasa,  
 un extraño sediento. Y no se sabe  
 qué vinieron hacer sobre la tierra (166-167).

It is significant that the primary symbol of this poem is the pomegranate, which according to Cirlot (228), has long been associated with the blood of Dionysus. The principal theme of the poem is one that appears frequently in *Las ilusiones*, the preoccupation with the passage of time. In this poem and in others, the speaker's reac-

tion to the problem of aging is to seek the life source in nature, here during the first half of the poem in the grape vine, another obviously Dionysian symbol, and in the second half of the poem in the pomegranate, a symbol of fecundity and thus, of regeneration. We may note that death, in varying forms, is an equally important concern in this poem, as it was in the one just discussed of Guillén. Whereas in Guillén's poem the life of the trees, its veins, remained contained in the table top, in Gil-Albert's poem the emphasis throughout is on unfettered movement and flow. Rather than being contained within limits, life surpasses its limits and its destruction is therefore inevitable. The «joviales corrientes de la vida» in line five are drawn to the vines, the «zumo letal de la existencia» of line nine, and there is clearly a suggestion of Bacchic celebration of life's madness. The word *letal* also implies the end of celebration and annihilation of form in any fixed sense.

Beginning with the second half of the poem on line twelve, the emphasis is on a superabundance of life, one that has exceeded the bounds of order and which threatens its own destruction. This is first symbolized in lines fifteen and following, where a lost traveller stops before «un mísero árbol que no puede / soportar la fatiga de sus frutos». The remaining lines of the poem are an interplay between superabundance of life and death, reflected in the language and the imagery of the poem. The enjambement on lines twenty and twenty-one «joyeles / desenterrados» increases the tension of the poem. Whereas on a purely sensorial level the imagery highlights the beautiful, jewel-like quality of the pomegranates, on a conceptual level, the conflict between life and death is created in the tension suggested between «joyeles» and «desenterrados», the one word conveying a notion of supreme beauty, and the other reminding us of the earthly origin of that beauty. The final lines of the poem most clearly suggest conflict in the imagery. The word *resquebrajadas* conveys the fragility of the pomegranates, and while also evoking their fertility, it nevertheless strongly suggests their imminent destruction because of their excessive display of the life force. The crack in the fruit, exposing the seeds may be related to the continuation of the life cycle, recalling one of the primordial manifestations of the Dionysian concept of life, that of an excess that turns over existing order and destroys itself in order to recreate. Most important, despite the beauty of the fruit, the pure line of its form is broken in the



crack, suggesting an element of destruction and change that distinguishes Gil-Albert's poetry from that of Guillén.

While «Las granadas» exemplifies Gil-Albert's Dionysian mode of expression in *Las ilusiones*, it is not unique. There are various other important poems in which the imagery and the way in which it functions point to a fundamentally Dionysian mode of expression. The grape vine plays a significant role in much of Gil-Albert's imagery. Two other poems in which it is an important symbol are also from *Las ilusiones*. In «Los viñedos» with the significant subtitle («Dionisiaca»), the primary concern is the passage of time. The grape vines are symbolic of regeneration, this time in contrast to the speaker's advancing age. The theme of the passage of time is expressed in imagery relating to the growth, abundance and harvest of the earth's fruit. The desire to recapture lost youth is expressed in the speaker's attitude of awe toward the resurgence of life as expressed in the vines:

La colina, antes árida,  
 esplende ahora en su muella verdor matinal.  
 Los tiernísimos brazos del viñedo  
 dejan esa balanceante indolencia  
 sobre la que los dioses no reposan,  
 están enamorados  
 de esos cálidos brotes terrenales,  
 de esos oscuros hijos de la tierra  
 hacia los cuales baja algunas veces,  
 como raudal humano,  
 su deliquio amoroso (1, 159).

In addition to the imagery which suggests the life process, the references to the gods and the personification of the vines place the poem well within the Greek tradition. The gods themselves take part in the Dionysian celebration of life. The entire poem depicts the passage of human life, its joy and madness, in the life cycle of the grape vine. In later stanzas the Dionysian legend is evoked in the harvest of the grapes and subsequent destruction of the vines in preparation for the coming winter.

Another extensive poem in which the life cycle is portrayed in images from the natural world, and in which Gil-Albert uses the grape vine as an important symbol of life is «Himno a la vida», also

from *Las ilusiones*. As in «Los viñedos», the imagery strongly suggests the Dionysian legend in its connection between superabundance of life and its impending destruction. Imagery from the natural world is combined with mythological allusions to treat the theme of the passage of time. The poem also has its basis in a biographical incident. The tragic death of Gil-Albert's sister, which also inspired other poems<sup>7</sup>, in this poem is depicted through the legend of Persephone, the daughter of Demeter, who was carried off to the underworld by the lord of darkness<sup>8</sup>. In «Himno a la vida» the legends of Persephone and of Dionysus function simultaneously, as the speaker recognizes the precariousness of his own life while visiting his sister's grave. In one section of the poem the grape vine figures as a symbol to develop the *Ubi sunt* theme:

..... ¿Dónde fueron  
 los que como racimos se mecían  
 en nacarado aire, tal las ubres  
 de una vitalidad encantadora,  
 entre las hojas mágicas de fuego  
 de aquel festín? ..... (181)

The significant factor here is that in Gil-Albert's poem, the Greek legends serve the purpose of focussing on life's constant change and ephemerality. The sensorial level of the poem highlights the sensuous beauty of the concrete world with its flowering vines and ripe fruit, while the conceptual level emphasizes the necessity of death and destruction in the continuing life cycle. In lines toward the end of the poem, the speaker invokes the memory of his dead sister, whose life he sees symbolized in the return of spring:

Vuelve hacia mí tus lágrimas sombrías,  
 fraternal resonancia de ancho seno,  
 antigua jovencilla ilusionada  
 cuyos largos cabellos aún evocan  
 aquella brisa errante. Ahora el hermano

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<sup>7</sup> Brines discusses poems which deal with Gil-Albert's personal tragedy and how he transforms this through superimposition of the legends of Persephone and Dionysus (233-236).

<sup>8</sup> See Edith Hamilton (47-54) for a relation of these two legends.

tiende a tus pies las viñas de amargura  
 y en derredor los campos que florecen  
 leves lirios oscuros se preparan  
 a vernos enlazados como amantes  
 cruzar las blancas crestas de la tierra  
 por donde están las uvas que no apagan  
 el eterno sabor incandescente  
 de su fértil amargo..... (182)

An important factor in the connection of the legends of Persephone and Dionysus is that the speaker seeks his own regeneration, perhaps the possibility of recovering some of his youthful vigor, in the remembrance of his sister. The final tone of the poem is one of modified optimism, one in which a precarious balance is struck between the flowering of life on a purely sensorial level and the consciousness of its ephemerality on the conceptual level.

In the previous analyses we have observed the ways in which Gil-Albert's imagery, rather than reflecting the harmony and accord of the sensorial and conceptual levels, as does the poetry of Guillén, shows a basic tension between these two levels. It is chiefly in this respect that we may distinguish between the Apollonian and the Dionysian modes of expression. Earlier I stated that whereas Guillén's poetry, even the least optimistic, stresses the ultimate triumph of order over chaos, Gil-Albert's poetry, while also essentially optimistic in its affirmation of life, stresses rather a constant conflict between order and chaos. In each case, the way in which the imagery functions is fundamental in explaining this difference.

Another factor to be considered in analyzing the difference between the Apollonian and the Dionysian modes of expression is the relative openness or closedness in space the imagery conveys. Here, too, we may make a distinction between Guillén and Gil-Albert. Whereas in Guillén's poetry we often find fixed boundaries that confine a vision within certain spatial limits, in Gil-Albert's poetry such limits are rare.

In Guillén's poetry geometric shapes in imagery often contribute to the impression of a «closed» scene. Most critics have stressed the importance of the circle as a symbol of perfection in Guillén's poetry<sup>9</sup>. Few, if any, however, have noted the importance of other

<sup>9</sup> Debicki notes the circular structure of many of the poems of *Cántico*

geometric shapes in his works. In various poems of *Cántico* the square or the angle functions to give prescribed limits to a vision, and through this very order, protects the speaker from the confusion that may surround him beyond those limits. One such poem, beautifully representative of the Apollonian mode of expression, is «Casa con dos patios»:

Siempre seré el forastero  
 Que ve junto a la cancela  
 Cómo en el patio primero  
 Mármol frío  
 Vela  
 Por el señorío.  
 Pero aquel patio segundo  
 Con su cielo — tierra  
 Con sol — me envuelve en un mundo  
 Que pasma, ciñe y se cierra. (262)

In this poem we are dealing with a contrast of the natural world, in Guillén's concept a perfect world, to man's world, often imperfect. The cold, artificial order of the latter world is what we see in the first half of the poem. The second half of the poem reveals the «other» patio, the more open patio which features earth and sky. Yet, as the last line of the poem stresses, this patio, while it appears to grant the speaker light, air, and breadth of vision, still limits that vision as he is wrapped in it. Despite the fact that the second patio girds (*ciñe*) the speaker and encloses him within it, however, the mood is one of comfort and security rather than of tension or distress. The speaker is able to accept the limits imposed upon him not only as necessary, but even as desirable<sup>10</sup>. Spatial limits are not negative, since they still allow possibility for depth of vision in Guillén's world. This attitude is fundamentally Apollonian in that prescribed, ordered form is seen as necessary for the highest level of artistic creation. Perhaps the poem from

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(*Jorge Guillén*, 67). MacCurdy discusses geometric figures in Guillén with special emphasis on the Mandala (93-94). See also Georges Poulet's study on the theme of the circle in Guillén.

<sup>10</sup> MacCurdy notes an extended metaphor in the poem «Tornasol» which «reflects Guillén's belief in the necessity of limits in life» (92).

*Cántico* that best illustrates Guillén's ability to project a vision unlimited in depth while limited in spatial perspective is «Una ventana»:

- El cielo sueña nubes para el mundo real  
 Con elemento amante de la luz y el espacio.  
 Se desparraman hoy dunas de un arrecife,  
 Arenales con ondas marinas que son nieves.
- 5 Tantos cruces de azar, por ornato caprichos,  
 Están ahí de bulto con una irresistible  
 Realidad sonriente. Yo resido en las márgenes  
 De una profundidad de transparencia en bloque.  
 El aire está ciñendo, mostrando, realzando
- 10 Las hojas en la rama, las ramas en el tronco,  
 Los muros, los aleros, las esquinas, los postes:  
 Serenidad en evidencia de la tarde,  
 Que exige una visión tranquila de ventana.  
 Se acoge el pormenor a todo su contorno:
- 15 Guijarros, esa valla, más lejos un alambre.  
 Cada minuto acierta con su propia aureola,  
 ¿O es la figuración que sueña este cristal?  
 Soy como mi ventana. Me maravilla el aire.  
 ¡Hermosura tan límpida ya de tan entendida,
- 20 Entre el soy y la mente! Hay palabras muy tersas,  
 Y yo quiero saber como el aire de Junio.  
 La inquietud de algún álamo forma brisa visible,  
 En círculo de paz se me cierra la tarde,  
 Y un cielo bien alzado se ajusta a mi horizonte. (155)

This poem is one of the finest examples of the Apollonian mode of expression. In it the square plays an important role in setting the mood. As the title suggests, the window conveys the idea of one looking through it: we are immediately aware of the speaker's consciousness ordering the reality he views. Although the first seven lines of the poem do contain the movement of sand dunes and sea (just as we saw the movement of veins of wood in «Naturaleza viva»), this movement is contained within limits in lines six and seven. The words *de bulto* especially convey the notion of a picture in a frame. The window as framework for the speaker's

vision brings the exterior world inward, centering it in his consciousness.

The poem reveals, of course, the function of the poet as interpreter and organizer of reality, as he molds his vision and creates an aura of permanence to it, transforming it through art. Art prescribes necessary limits in order that perfect form may result. In line nine we again find a reference to these limits in the word *ciñendo*. The kind of artistic molding suggested in the verb *ceñir* is at the heart of the Apollonian mode of expression. Man is able to mold his view of the world into an artistic unity, but in order for that vision to function as a unity, there must be harmony, stability and permanence.

In «Una ventana» harmony suggested in the sensorial imagery is reflected on the conceptual level in the speaker's mind, as he indicates his awareness of his own crucial role in transmitting his vision, and as he compares himself to it, «Soy como mi ventana.» Line twenty highlights the harmonious joining of the sensorial and conceptual levels, the natural world and the mind. Rather than seeking to experience the life cycle through an Orphic self-sacrifice, becoming fused with it, as does Gil-Albert's speaker, Guillén's speaker seeks to attain perfect knowledge in serenity and meditation. His inclusion of himself in the picture grants the sense of immediacy so characteristic of Guillén's poetry, but it does not negate the essentially meditative nature of the poem. The poem's ending stresses not only order and tranquility, but also a world of unchanging transparency and perfect beauty.

We may make one more crucial distinction between Guillén and Gil-Albert. In the poems of Gil-Albert there is a constant interchange between the human and the natural worlds, in which the speaker, his sister or other human beings are described in terms of the plant life which surrounds them: the grape vine, the pomegranate or flowers. In converse manner, the plant world is often personified. The total effect is that of a constant rupture of the normal limits which separate one form of existence from the other. This type of rupture is an important aspect of the Dionysian mode in art, and conveys the notion of perpetual change from one manifestation of being to another. In Guillén's poetry, on the other hand, there is usually a clear distinction between the world that the speaker observes and himself, notwithstanding the fact that he

is placed squarely in it. Guillén's most famous poem portraying the world as a perfect, artistic unity, while holding intact the identity of each component within the unity, including the speaker, is, of course, «Perfección»:

Queda curvo el firmamento,  
 Compacto azul, sobre el día.  
 Es el redondeamiento  
 Del esplendor: mediodía.  
 Todo es cúpula. Reposa,  
 Central sin querer, la rosa.  
 A un sol en cenit sujeta.  
 Y tanto se da el presente  
 Que el pie caminante siente  
 La integridad del planeta. (250)

Guillén's poem has elicited many fine analyses of it, to which I see no need to add here. It will be obvious from what has been said already that it is an archetypal example of the Apollonian mode of expression. A poem in a later collection of Gil-Albert, *Homenajes e in promptus*<sup>11</sup>, offers a vivid contrast to Guillén's «Perfección».

«Canicular», subtitled «homenaje al Dios-Pan», is crucial to a complete understanding of Gil-Albert's Dionysian approach to poetic creation, as the homage to Pan suggests. The poem celebrates the joy of existence which Gil-Albert sees as characteristic of Mediterranean life:

Hay mañanas inmensas que se quiere  
 que no acabaran nunca. Un gran sosiego,  
 una calma, una paz, como potencias  
 plenas de virus viejo como el mundo  
 late a largas distancias, cerca, lejos,

<sup>11</sup> *Homenajes e in promptus* first appeared in 1976 under the auspices of the Institución «Fray Bernardino de Sahagún» in León. There are three sections in this first edition. The first is titled «Carmina manu tremendi ducere», and in the edition of Gil-Albert's complete poetic works, published in Valencia, this first section is apart from the collection *Homenajes e in promptus*. The second and third part of the 1976 edition have only minor changes in the complete poetic works, the most significant, the addition of a homage to Shakespeare.

como una pulsación intraducible  
dentro de la que estamos recostados  
hechos de fuego, gasa, o armonía.  
¿Es uno flor, delicia, pasatiempo  
felino adormilado, mariposa,  
ramas que penden suaves a la brisa,  
o el mismo sol insecto rumoroso  
que nos circunda? Nada nos parece  
que existe fuera, dentro, estar es todo,  
una firme tensión que no se siente  
por lo frágil que es, no se adivina  
no se desea, está, su escasa forma  
lo invade todo, alma, cuerpo, mundo,  
flotar de unos azules que se vierten  
en nuestro corazón y allí se arrullan  
como palomos, lejos, lejos, lejos,  
lo más lejos posible, en la otra orilla  
de la que no sabremos cierto nunca  
cuál será su respuesta: paz o muerte. (pp. 86-87)

The first lines of the poem stress the presence of the speaker who realizes that the beauty of a given moment cannot remain unchanged. The calm he describes in the following lines is broken with the words «potencias / plenas de virus viejos», which reveal life as constantly changing, pulsating energy, and suggest its ultimate destruction. The first eight lines of the poem stress the relationship between individual life and the cosmos, with images suggesting fire and gaseous energy.

The second part of the poem shows the speaker's concern with the ontological question, yet reason for being is not the primary issue. The tension in the poem results from the speaker's desire to enjoy fully the present moment and his anguished realization that it must pass inevitably. As he states, «estar es todo», and even as he seeks not to analyze, not to examine his feeling of supreme contentment, especially not to acknowledge his anguish, his repetition of negations attests to his insecurity in the present enjoyment.

Whereas in Guillén's poem the subtle mixture of essence (the perfect moment immortalized in the poem) and existence (the speaker's experience of the moment) resolves itself into the tra-



veler's foot planted firmly on the ground, in Gil-Albert's poem essence and existence are in conflict in the speaker's mind. What is resolved in Guillén's poem through a centralization of energy to a core of existence (symbolized in the perfection of the circle), in Gil-Albert's poem becomes a conflict between opposite poles of energy that operate from within the speaker and seem to pull him from his own center even as he feels his existence at its fullest. The conflict suggested in lines thirteen and fourteen, «... Nada nos parece / que existe fuera, dentro, ...» results in lines twenty-one and twenty-two in the speaker's being pulled farther and farther away from himself until he begins to lose himself entirely.

Herein lies the basic difference between a Dionysian concept of life, revealed in Gil-Albert's poem, and an Apollonian concept of life as evoked in Guillén's poem. Even the titles of the two poems, «Canicular» and «Perfección», are indicative of the distinct world views. «Canicular» suggests the madness of life when lived to its outermost limits, whereas «Perfección» suggests the idea of harmonious existence developed in Guillén's poem. Whereas the noon-day sun in Guillén's poem suggests life at its zenith, the «sol insecto humoroso» in Gil-Albert's poem has within it not only the idea of vital energy, but also that of life's gradual decay. While Guillén's imagery unites in harmony the sensorial and the conceptual levels of the poem, Gil-Albert's imagery points to conflicting concepts and to the speaker's efforts to balance them.

We may conclude that while Gil-Albert begins his poetic career as a part of the Generation of '27, he diverges from that group in various important ways. While he shares with Jorge Guillén an admiration for the Greek culture, his expression of that culture in his own poems is fundamentally different from that of Guillén. This difference may be best characterized as the difference between Apollonian and Dionysian expression, and is revealed in the contrasting ways in which imagery functions in the works of the two poets. Whereas in the poetry of Guillén imagery tends to result in an ordering of the world, and in the transformation of chaotic creation into artistic unity and permanence, in Gil-Albert, imagery points to a changing reality, one that reflects an unending cycle of creation, destruction and recreation. The Dionysian mode of expression in Gil-Albert's poetry makes him an important transitional figure, moreover, bridging a gap between the poetry of the first

half of the century and that of the second half. He is deservedly coming to be considered an important voice in twentieth century peninsular poetry.

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