



### CHAPTER III

#### THE INFLUENCE OF THE FRENCH ART FOR ART'S SAKE SCHOOL ON THE IMAGERY IN THE POEMS OF OSCAR WILDE

" . . . a poet will, in the long run, naturally tend to draw the large proportion of his images from the objects he knows best, or thinks most about, or from the incidents, among myriads he had experienced, to which he is sensitive, and which therefore remain within his knowledge."<sup>1</sup>

It is evident that most of Wilde's experience dealt with the studies of French literature, specifically, the Art for Art's Sake School. He found these experiences very precious as he wrote to one friend: "La poésie française a toujours été parmi mes maîtresses les plus adorées. . . ." <sup>2</sup> If we call the work of the French writers 'the seed,' Wilde's was its 'fruit.' Imbued with these experiences, he reflected the derived knowledge in most of his work. Some traces of the Art for Art's Sake's theories can obviously be seen, for example, many qualities of colour, of light, and of youthful aspiration. When his first collection of poems appeared in 1881, it was criticized: "They are not very distinguished or original poems, and are very much influenced by

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<sup>1</sup> Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Rupert Hart-Davis, ed. The Letters of Oscar Wilde, p. 299.

the poets of the Art for Art's Sake movement in France, by Baudelaire and by Gautier in particular."<sup>1</sup>

The chosen imagery in most of his poems reminds us of those of the French Art for Art's Sake poets. They had a common point of view on aesthetic qualities in the poems. Wilde, as these poets, enjoyed playing with several kinds of senses. Consequently, we can easily find in his work almost all perceptive imagery:

- visual imagery
- auditory imagery
- olfactory imagery
- tactile imagery

The most aesthetic device in which he followed the French writers was to give the correspondence to these types of imagery and to make it harmonious.

#### Visual Imagery

For the poets of the Art for Art's Sake School, aestheticism revealed itself through the display of visual imagery, especially, color, light and exotic experience. Pursuing this doctrine, Wilde made his poems very colorful, concrete and full of exotic references to Greek or oriental studies.

#### A. Colour Imagery

Of all the perceptive imagery, colour is the most frequent in Wilde's poems. It appeals to the vision the most. It possesses some

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<sup>1</sup>Enid Starkie, From Gautier to Eliot, p. 102.

aesthetic and artistic value. Consequently, it plays an important role in the work of the Art for Art's Sake poets. The display of colour varies according to the taste and the experience of the poets. To Baudelaire, pink and blue shades and bright colours are suitable for the dream, the dawn, and the twilight which make his soul enchanted. On the contrary, he prefers dark, sombre colours like grey, black, blue to describe reality because these colours represent to him his unhappiness, his melancholy, his solitude and the regret in his life. Because of his pessimism<sup>1</sup>, he had a love for cool and sterile beauty. As a result, black and grey are repeated frequently in his work, for example, in "Chacun sa Chimère":

Sous un grand ciel gris, dans une grande plaine poudreuse, sans chemins, sans gazon, sans un chardon, sans une ortie, je rencontraï plusieurs hommes qui marchaient courbés.<sup>2</sup>

and in "Les Fleurs du Mal":

- Quand le ciel bas et lourd pèse comme un couvercle.<sup>3</sup>
- Couvercle noir de la grande marmite.<sup>4</sup>

To Wilde, the colours repeated the most frequently are red, yellow, and white. These three colours are always used to convey the vivid atmosphere like the beauty of springtime, while white and purple

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<sup>1</sup>Panya Borisutdhi, "Le Pessimisme de Baudelaire" (Master's Thesis, Department of Western Languages, Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University, 1965)

<sup>2</sup>Baudelaire, Oeuvres Complètes, p. 235.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 168.

are for the sterility of autumn and winter and death atmosphere. Flowers which occur frequently in Wilde's poems are the medium which Wilde likes best to reflect colour. They reveal, not only colours, but also certain meanings and feelings. In 'The Garden of Eros,' the use of colour or flowers is very magnificent. Wilde presented the movement of summer to autumn and autumn to winter by the shades of colour which are minutely distinguished.

The colours are used to describe the movement from summer to autumn:

<u>yellow</u>	<u>pink and purple</u>	<u>white</u>	<u>blue</u>
daffodil	rose	narcissus	harebell
celandine	hollyhock	columbine	violet
	lilac		
	anemone		

In this part, Wilde emphasized pink and purple. Yellow is not used so much. More than that, its vivid colour is interrupted by white and blue. It seems that the poet tried to create a sad atmosphere not only by the pale colour of the flowers, but also by their references that evoke the grave-yard or death atmosphere.

Too soon indeed! yet here the daffodil,  
 That love-child of the Spring, has lingered on  
 To vex the rose with jealousy, and still  
 The harebell spreads her azure pavilion,  
 And like a strayed and wandering reveller  
 Abandoned of its brothers, whom long since June's messenger  
 The missel-thrush has frightened from the glade,  
 One pale narcissus loiters fearfully  
 Close to a shadowy nook, where half afraid  
 Of their own loveliness some violets lie  
 That will not look the gold sun in the face  
 For fear of too much splendour, . . .

. . .

There are the flowers which mourning Herakles  
 Strewed on the tomb of Hylas, columbine,  
 Its white doves all a-flutter where the breeze  
 Kissed them too harshly, the small celandine,  
 That yellow-kirtled chorister of eve,  
 And lilac lady's-smock, -but let them bloom alone and leave<sup>1</sup>

The above stanzas accumulated the images of many flowers which give reference to death; daffodil is a beautiful golden flower associated with the sad story of Proserpina who was kidnapped by the God Pluto, while she was picking lilies in the fields, and carried off as his captive to the Underworld. In her terror and despair, Proserpina let drop the lilies which, so Greek legend tells, turned to daffodils as they touched the earth.<sup>2</sup> Violets symbolize death because of the shortness of their life, for they are one of the very first flowers to appear with the coming of spring and seldom stay to enjoy the summer sunshine.<sup>3</sup> Both daffodil and violet may be associated with the belief found in the early plant lore, that those spring flowers that hang their heads symbolize grief and tears.<sup>4</sup> Rose and harebell as well are pale, fragile and live a short life. Narcissus is associated with the sad story, according to Greek mythology, of narcissus, a son of the river-nymph Liriope and the river-god Cephissus. When he was born, the seer Tiresias told his mother that he would live to old age only if he never came to know

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Wilde, "The Garden of Eros," Complete Works (London: Collins, 1971), p. 717.

<sup>2</sup>Jessica Kerr, Shakespeare's Flowers (London: Longman, 1970), p. 75.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

himself. By the time he was a youth, he was so beautiful and loved by many men as well as maidens, but he scorned them all out of pride in his own beauty. At last he died of falling in love with himself. When he died, his body disappeared and in its place was a lovely flower.<sup>1</sup> Columbine too is a flower thought to be a 'thankless flower' and the emblem of forsaken lovers.<sup>2</sup>

After the death atmosphere emphasized especially in the last stanza, Wilde announced the movement from autumn to winter. It is remarkable that Wilde disliked winter like other Art for Art's Sake poets who realized the sufferings of winter. Baudelaire found that winter meant the deep sufferings of the heart, the outbreak of anger, hatred and fearful feelings. Wilde announced the beginning of winter by this line: "In pale virginity; the winter snow,"<sup>3</sup> in order to prepare the readers that he will give the atmosphere as pale as possible by accentuating white and purple. Thus, many white flowers are presented such as convolvulus, daisies, 'creamy-meadow-sweet whiter than Juno's throat,' narcissus. The pale colour evokes his distaste for winter. Winter is 'the snow of a flowerless day'<sup>4</sup> as he described in 'Magdalen Walks' and it is also the destroyer of beauty:

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<sup>1</sup>Catherine B. Avery, ed. The New Century Classical Handbook (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962), p. 736.

<sup>2</sup>Jessica Kerr, Shakespeare's Flowers, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup>Oscar Wilde, "The Garden of Eros," Complete Works, p. 718.

<sup>4</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Magdalen Walks," Complete Works, p. 746.

For the ruin and rain of winter will shortly come,  
 The lily will lose its gold, and the chestnut bloom  
 In billows of red and white on the grass will lie<sup>1</sup>

On the contrary, he was fascinated by the colourful springtime, its splendour of sun, of grass and of flowers. He gave the vivid image of springtime. In 'Magdalen Walks' the same flowers are glorified as 'the gold of the flower of March.'

The colour imagery in Wilde's poems is deliberate to give harmony to this imagery in order to achieve a deep aesthetic effect.

This English Thames is holier far than Rome,  
 Those harebells like a sudden flush of sea  
 Breaking across the woodland, with the foam  
 Of meadow-sweet and white anemone  
 To fleck their blue waves, -God likelier there  
 Than hidden in that crystal-hearted star the pale monks bear!  
 Those violet-gleaming butterflies that take  
 Yon creamy lily for their pavilion.<sup>2</sup>

These lines from 'The Burden of Itys' give only white and blue image. The poet distinguishes the colours to support distance. The blue imagery reflects the sea and the sky which give the impression of the voyage.<sup>3</sup>

It is evident that the colours of the flowers in the poems of Wilde come from his environment. His 'flower of March' was repeated almost every time when he wanted to use flowers in order to evoke

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Oscar Wilde, "The Burden of Itys," Complete Works, p. 736.

<sup>3</sup> When Wilde wrote 'Impression du Voyage' only the blue was emphasized.

colours. Exotic flowers and colours were rarely mentioned. In 'The Burden of Itys' he mentioned the 'orchid' and the leaf of which:

. . . , each leaf is flecked with spotted gold  
 As if Jove's gorgeous leman Danae  
 Hot from his gilded arms had stooped to kiss  
 The trembling petals,<sup>1</sup>

It is artistic also to set the unusual flower and colour in an exotic background.

Wilde used not only flowers but also other plants in an aesthetic way to represent the beauty of his love. In 'La Bella Donna Della Mia Mente,' he compared her lips with 'roses after evening rain,'<sup>2</sup> her neck with 'white melilote,' her mouth with 'pomegranate' and her cheeks with 'the peach [which] reddens to the south.'<sup>3</sup> In 'Chanson,' it is more aesthetic to evoke flowers in relation to the events. The contrasting situation of the man and his love is reflected through the flowers. The man encounters the forsaken love while his lover is happy in her successful one.

For you a House of Ivory  
 (Roses are white in the rose-bower)!  
 A narrow bed for me to lie,  
 (White, O white, is the hemlock flower)!

Myrtle and jessamine for you  
 (O the red rose is fair to see)!

For me the cypress and the rue,  
 (Finest of all is rosemary)!

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Wilde, "The Burden of Itys," Complete Works, p. 738.

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Wilde, "La Bella Donna Della Mia Mente," Complete Works, p. 751.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



For you three lovers of your hand,  
 (Green grass where a man lies dead)!  
 For me three paces on the sand,  
 (Plant lilies at my head)!<sup>1</sup>

The flowers mentioned in parentheses are associated with the event described in the previous line: white roses are associated with marriage, white hemlock, a poisonous flower, represents death, red roses are the flowers of passion while rosemary is the flower of repentance.

The role of flowers is diminished in "Ave Imperatrix." Colour is presented through another medium, for example, the white of 'the long white-crested waves of fight,' the yellow of 'the yellow leopard,' 'the brazen-throated clarion' and 'yellow sand,' the black of the 'blackened jaws' of the leopards.<sup>2</sup>

'In the Gold Room' is the poem consecrated to his favourite colours: white, yellow, and red. It is very aesthetic for the poet accumulated much colour imagery to describe the beauty of his love. All the white imagery is grouped to emphasize the whiteness of her hands:

Her ivory hands on the ivory keys  
 Strayed in a fitful fantasy,  
 Like the silver gleam when the poplar trees  
 Rustle their pale leaves listlessly,  
 Or the drifting foam of a restless sea  
 When the waves show their teeth in the flying breeze.<sup>3</sup>

The following stanza shows the role of yellow which describes the beauty of her golden hair and the red for the beauty of her lips.

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Chanson," Complete Works, p. 752.

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Ave Imperatrix," Complete Works, p. 710.

<sup>3</sup>Oscar Wilde, "In the Gold Room," Complete Works, p. 772.

Her gold hair fell on the wall of gold  
 Like the delicate gossamer tangles spun  
 On the burnished disk of the marigold,  
 Or the sunflower turning to meet the sun  
 When the gloom of the jealous night is done,  
 And the spear of the lily is aureoled.

And her sweet red lips on these lips of mine  
 Burned like the ruby fire set  
 In the swinging lamp of a crimson shrine,  
 Or the bleeding wounds of the pomegranate,  
 Or the heart of the lotus drenched and wet  
 With the spilt-out blood of the rose-red wine.<sup>1</sup>

Then 'Impression' and 'Impression du Matin' are presented as "impression of colour." His three favorite colours again are used.

'Symphony in Yellow' displays yellow imagery. This poem echoes 'Symphonie en Blanc Majeur' of Gautier whose use of colour imagery Wilde imitated closely. Gautier gave the impression of white by accumulating many kinds of white imagery solely while Wilde chose the yellow ones to provide yellow impressions.

An omnibus across the bridge  
 Crawls like a yellow butterfly,

. . .

Big barges full of yellow hay  
 Are moored against the shadowy wharf;  
 And, like a yellow silken scarf,  
 The thick fog hangs along the quay.

The yellow leaves begin to fade  
 And flutter from the Temple elms,<sup>2</sup>

This is the technique Wilde recaptured from the poem of Gautier. Gautier had his excellent style to reinforce the quality of white by giving only the white imagery:

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Oscar Wilde, "Symphony in Yellow," Complete Works, p. 308.

Le plumage qui les revêt,  
Faire luire leur peau plus blanche  
Que la neige de leur duvet

. . .

Blanche comme le clair de lune  
Sur les glaciers dans les cieux froids;

. . .

Son sein, neige moulée en globe,  
Contre les camélias blancs  
Et le blanc satin de sa robe <sup>1</sup>  
Soutien des combats insolents.

It is remarkable that Wilde imitated directly one imagery that Gautier used in 'Symphonie en Blanc Majeur.' Gautier, trying to stress the white, introduced white butterflies into the imagery:

L'ivoire, où ses mains ont des ailes,  
Et, comme des papillons blancs,  
Sur la pointe des notes frêles <sup>2</sup>  
Suspendent leur baisers tremblants.

Wilde, aiming at the yellow, compared an omnibus with a yellow butterfly.

When he deals with religious ceremony or catholicism, only white, blue, gold, and purple are concerned. White is mainly associated with Mary, though sometimes blue is used. Usually white symbolizes virginity, purity, as Wilde described Mary in 'San Miniato': 'the Virginal white Queen of Grace!' <sup>3</sup> and in 'Madonna Mia' he tried to describe one innocent

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<sup>1</sup> Théophile Gautier, Emaux et Camées (Paris: Garnier, 1954), pp. 21-22.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Oscar Wilde, "San Miniato," Complete Works, p. 725.

girl so as to give the image of Mary. Mostly white is emphasized. He introduced the girl as 'a lily-girl' which could be Mary because she often appears in paintings with lilies in her hand.

And longing eyes half veiled by slumberous tears  
 Like bluest water seen through mists of rain;  
 Pale cheeks whereon no love hath left its stain,  
 Red underlip drawn in for fear of love,  
 And white throat, whiter than the silvered dove,  
 Through whose wan marble creeps one purple vein.<sup>1</sup>

When he is concerned with religious ceremony, he presents the priests in purple, white and gold:

When, bright with purple and with<sup>2</sup>gold,  
 Come priest and holy cardinal,

or

Priest-like, he wore a robe more white than foam.<sup>3</sup>

White is chosen to signify purity, purple is the symbol of Christ's blood and gold can be the glory of Christ.

There are many correlations that give the aesthetic colour, for example: the silvered wing of the dove, its amethystine throat, sea-green meadows of the sky, the robe more white than flame, the blood-red sun, white throat, whiter than the silvered dove.

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<sup>1</sup> Oscar Wilde, "Madonna Mia," Complete Works, p. 732.

<sup>2</sup> Oscar Wilde, "Rome Unvisited," Complete Works, p. 729.

<sup>3</sup> Oscar Wilde, "Easter Day," Complete Works, p. 731.

## B. Light Imagery

As the element that provides aesthetic impressions, light fascinated the Art for Art's Sake poets. It is the distinction of the dandies that they prefer living the world of artifice, so that artificial lights play a much more important role than the natural ones. Baudelaire, who found the artificial light more impressive than the natural light, expressed this fascination in 'Les Fenêtres.'

Il n'est pas d'objet plus profond, plus mystérieux, plus fécond, plus ténébreux, plus éblouissant qu'une fenêtre éclairée d'une chandelle. Ce qu'on peut voir au soleil est toujours moins intéressant que ce qui se passe derrière une vitre.

Artificiality is often evoked by their praise of jewels and shining metals. Wilde declared his aim of poetry: "Poetry should be like a crystal, it should make life more beautiful and less real."<sup>2</sup> It is evidently the doctrine derived from the French writers which is faithfully reflected in many of Wilde's poems.

### Artificial Light

#### a. The Light of Metals and Jewels

Les Fleurs du Mal of Baudelaire and Gautier's Emaux et Camées have strong influences on the light imagery in the poems of Wilde. Baudelaire confessed his love of the light of jewels and metals in 'Les Bijoux':

Quand il jette en dansant son bruit vif et moqueur,  
Ce monde rayonnant de métal et de pierre

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<sup>1</sup>Baudelaire, Oeuvres Complètes, p. 288.

<sup>2</sup>Michael Hardwich, The Osprey Guide to Oscar Wilde, p. 54.

Me ravit en extase, et j'aime à la fureur,<sup>1</sup>  
Les choses où le son se mêle à la lumière.

The same opinion is manifest in the work of Wilde. It is obviously remarked in 'Les Ballons.' Wilde tried his best to crystalize the balloons as well as their surroundings. 'The light and luminous balloons'<sup>2</sup> are floated against 'these turbid turquoise skies.'<sup>3</sup> To the movement of the balloons, he set much luminous imagery:

- Dip and drift like satin moons,
- Drift like silken butterflies;
- Float like strange transparent pearls,
- Fall and float like silver dust.
- Then to the tall trees they climb,  
Like thin globes of amethyst,  
Wandering opals keeping tryst<sup>4</sup>  
With the rubies of the line.

Wilde's poems are filled with many lights of metal and jewels correlations, such as, silver moon, the sheen of golden hair, an argent shield, the sapphire bay, the sapphire heavens, the rain-pearls, a rain of gold, sapphire-lake, the turquoise sky, the brazen-throated clarion, sapphire cave of sea, the gilded garden of the sun, the gold sun, the pearled dew, field of trembling gold, silver-breasted dove, the rows of golden sheaves, amethystine throat (of the nightingale), the ivory gate, ivory hands, the silver gleam, gold hair, silver woods, honey-

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<sup>1</sup>Baudelaire, Oeuvres Complètes, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Les Ballons," Complete Works, p. 306.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

coloured amber beads, opal-hued anemones, amethystine panoply, diamonded mail, a throne of pearl, emerald pillars, his burnished metal wings.

It is very remarkable that diamond, the most shining and the most luminous kind of jewel, is mentioned very rarely in his poems.

#### b. The Light of the Lamps

This kind of light plays a secondary role. Only a few times does the poet mention the light of the lamps. In 'Impression du Matin,' he gave the image of one pale woman all alone who "loitered beneath the gas lamp's flare."<sup>1</sup> However, he had the same taste of Baudelaire who mingled the artificial with the natural. He compared the shining apples and oranges to the bright light of the lamps.

- And like bright lamps the fabled apples glow.<sup>2</sup>
- The yellow apples glowed like fire,<sup>3</sup>
- The oranges on each o'erhanging spray  
Burned as bright lamps of gold to shame the day;<sup>4</sup>

#### Natural Light

The light of the sun plays the primary role followed by the role of the moon and the stars. The poet appreciated the splendour of the sun very much as he wrote in 'Magdalen Walks':

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Impression du Matin," Complete Works, p. 745.

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Ravenna," Complete Works, p. 825.

<sup>3</sup>Oscar Wilde, "From Spring Days to Winter," Complete Works, p. 790.

<sup>4</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Sonnet," Complete Works, p. 728.

. . ., my heart! do not count it a profitless thing  
To have seen the splendour of sun, . . .<sup>1</sup>

The sun for him is "like a great dragon which writhes in gold."<sup>2</sup>  
Even in the death atmosphere, as he described in 'The Garden of Eros,'  
the sun still has its splendour:

Close to a shadowy nook, where half afraid  
Of their own loveliness some violets lie  
That will not look the gold sun in the face  
For fear of too much splendour, . . .<sup>3</sup>

Many correlations show that the poet was fascinated by the  
brightness of the flame of the sun: the burning east, blood-red sun, "I  
watched the day, till marked with wounds of flame. The turquoise sky to  
burnished gold was turned."<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, other nuances of the light  
of the sun are manifest in his poems too. The pale light of the dawn  
also touched him as he gave it the very artistic image:

- the long white fingers of the dawn<sup>5</sup>
- The dawn is rising from the sea,<sup>6</sup>  
Like a white lady from her bed.

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Magdalen Walks," Complete Works, p. 746.

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Fantasies Décoratives," Complete Works, p. 805.

<sup>3</sup>Oscar Wilde, "The Garden of Eros," Complete Works, p. 717.

<sup>4</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Sonnet on Approaching Italy," Complete Works,  
p. 725.

<sup>5</sup>Oscar Wilde, "By the Arno," Complete Works, p. 726.

<sup>6</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Impression," Complete Works, p. 779.



In addition, the sun is an important factor which provides aesthetic reflections like the bright reflection of dew drops shining against the sun.

- The dew is bright upon the hill<sup>1</sup>
- The light of "the gossamer threads and the nets of dew."<sup>2</sup>

The moon attracted the poet both by its splendour and its paleness. It is glorified as "Queen of the gardens of the sky."<sup>3</sup> Because the soft light of the moon is very outstanding, the poet frequently evoked it as "the silver moon" and when this soft light discriminates, it gives the sombre and pale surrounding. So sometimes, to the poet, it becomes "the pale usurper" and is assimilated to the sad atmosphere.

And like a withered leaf the moon  
Is blown across the stormy bay.  
And suddenly the moon withdraws  
Her sickle from the lightening skies,  
And to her sombre cavern flies,<sup>4</sup>  
Wrapped in a veil of yellow gauze.

In spite of its soft light, the moon is sometimes presented in a fierce way which contrasts with its character. In 'La Mer,' Wilde gave the strange image of the moon:

A wild moon in this wintry sky<sup>5</sup>  
Gleams like an angry lion's eye

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<sup>1</sup> Oscar Wilde, "By the Arno," Complete Works, p. 726.

<sup>2</sup> Oscar Wilde, "Magdalen Walks," Complete Works, p. 746.

<sup>3</sup> Oscar Wilde, "Lotus Leaves," Complete Works, p. 814.

<sup>4</sup> Oscar Wilde, "Impressions," Complete Works, p. 771.

<sup>5</sup> Oscar Wilde, "Impressions: La Mer," Complete Works, p. 821.

The comparison of Wilde is close to that of the French poet, Théophile Gautier, who wrote in Mademoiselle de Maupin "Le soleil ouvre tout grand son oeil jaune de lion aux paupières dorés." It is appropriate to compare the sun to a lion's eyes as Gautier did. The comparison suggests to us the flaming quality of both the lion's eyes and the sun. But the comparison of Wilde, who compared the moon to an angry lion's eye, is unusual because usually the light of the moon is rather gentle and soft, not flaming like that. Therefore, it is possible that Wilde, in trying to pursue the French poet, imitated him to emphasize the unique appearance of his "wild moon." Perhaps he had in mind the big, red, harvest moon.

Only the shining beautiful light of the stars attracts the poet. Their white shining light is obviously perceived. The poet liked to set them in relation to or in comparison with white flowers as "stars like lilies white and fair!"<sup>1</sup> "the bright-star-flower shone like a star of morning."<sup>2</sup>

Between artificial light and natural light, Wilde preferred the former to the latter. Many poems are consecrated to the artificial light while the natural light remains a little fragment in the poem. His fascination with light is less in comparison with the French poets, especially, with Baudelaire who worshipped every kind and every shade of light. Baudelaire gave importance to the artificial light as well as to the natural one. Many poems are consecrated to the natural light, for

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Lotus Leaves," Complete Works, p. 814.

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Wilde, "The Artist's Dream," Complete Works, p. 822.

example, "Le Crépuscule du Matin," "Le Crépuscule du Soir" which appeared both in Les Fleurs du Mal and Petits Poèmes en Prose. The sun is presented in every situation, from the bright shining sun, the white sun (le soleil blanc), the foggy sun (le soleil brouillé), and even the dying sun (le soleil moribond) exists in his work.

### C. Exotic Associations

Exoticism is one of the aesthetic interests which is respected by the Art for Art's Sake poets. Possessing the spirit of the dandy, they like to taste all new impressions, as Pater stated, "What we have to do is to be forever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, they are interested in everything that can provide them with these new impressions, for example, exotic countries like Greece, oriental countries, ritual ceremonies. Leconte de Lisle's Les Poèmes Antiques and Les Poèmes Barbares manifest the interest of the poet in Ancient Greek studies, Hinduism, Islam, Hebrew, Egyptian, Celtic and Polynesian cultures. In the poems of Wilde, Greek studies, Catholicism and oriental countries are prominent.

#### Greek Studies

Most of Wilde's poems were inspired by literary pursuits, especially, Greek. Since his childhood, Wilde was very interested in Greek literature. At the age of twelve, he read both Homer and Virgil in the original with passion.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Grecian beauty interested him

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<sup>1</sup> James Laver, Oscar Wilde, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Philippe Jullian, Oscar Wilde (London: Constable, 1969), p. 21.

because, being disappointed with the ugliness of the actual world, he turned, as other dandies, to the glory of the past which was marked mostly in Greece. This idea was stressed the most in 'The Burden of Itys.' He intended to distinguish the inferior beauty of England and the supreme beauty of the derivative culture of Rome. His regret for the past and the evocation of its beauty is expressed many times:

- Sing on! sing on! let the dull world grow young,  
Let elemental things take form again,  
And the old shapes of Beauty walk among  
The simple garths and open crofts, . . . <sup>1</sup>
- For well I know they are not dead at all,  
The ancient Gods of Grecian poesy. <sup>2</sup>

Many poems were dedicated to Grecian beauty, for example, 'The New Helen' which glorified Helen of Troy, 'Humanitad' in which we can find the unity of Grecian beauty. It is very distinctive that "Arcady" is mentioned so many times. Wilde used it to evoke the glory of ancient Greece. Arcady is known as an emblem of Greece because it was the place where many important mythological events took place. It was a favorite haunt of the pastoral god, Pan, whose worship was especially strong throughout the region: caves, springs, blasted trees, mountains, were sacred to him. In addition, it also was the birthplace of Athena. Because its forests were the favorite hunting ground of Artemis, it became the strongest centre of her worship as well. <sup>3</sup> Of course, many

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Wilde, "The Burden of Itys," Complete Works, p. 740.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 739.

<sup>3</sup>Catherine B. Avery, ed. The New Century Classical Handbook, p.

other schools of poetry have used Greek mythology, not only the Symbolists. The difference is that in previous schools, such as, the Romantics, the use of mythology is integral to the form and theme of the work, for example, Keats' Endymion. In Wilde's poems, however, the mythological Greek and Roman references are purely decorative to evoke sense impressions.

Greek mythological events are chosen to be put in a suitable context in order to make the poems as aesthetic as possible. When the poem concerned with beauty and music, Pan is always mentioned. He was the Greek god who was mentioned the most in the poems of Wilde. He attracted the poet because he also had some characteristics of the dandy. He was the woodland god, god of pastures and of flocks who never lived in Olympus but dwelt in Arcadia where he guarded his flocks and herd. He also was god of music and had many love affairs with many nymphs: Syrinx, Pitys, and Echo.<sup>1</sup> The poem entitled 'Pan' is devoted solely to regret for the loss of the music of Pan. In many poems, the poet likes to refer to or link the actual situation to the Greek background. In 'Canzonet,' when the lover sings a sad song to his love, the death of Pan is evoked:

Pan is not here  
And will not come again.<sup>2</sup>

Pastoral song is associated with the music of Pan as it appeared in 'The Garden of Eros':

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Bulfinch, Mythology of Greece and Rome (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 165-167.

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Canzonet," Complete Works, p. 307.

And I will cut a reed by yonder spring  
 And make the wood-gods jealous, and old Pan  
 Wonder what young intruder dares to sing<sup>1</sup>

The story of Endymion and the goddess of the moon is told many times as well and is used to evoke sad imagery. 'Engymion' is the poem consecrated to the love story of Endymion and the moon. Their story is told in 'The Garden of Eros' to emphasize the sad atmosphere.

It is not the sad story of Endymion that attracted the poet but the fame of his beauty. That is why the beautiful scene is associated with the aesthetic image of Endymion as in 'Lotus Leaves':

Ah! in those meadows is there peace  
 Where, girdled with a silver fleece,  
 As a bright shepherd, strays the moon?<sup>2</sup>

Both the beauty of Pan and Endymion attracted the poet so much that sometimes he compared himself with both of them:

- And then I'll pipe to thee that Grecian tale<sup>3</sup>  
 - Shall I, the last Endymion; lose all hope  
 Because rude eyes peer at my mistress through a telescope!<sup>4</sup>

Other Greek heroes whose beauty was attractive were also referred to for example: Hylas who was mentioned many times in the poems, Pallas who was given the image of 'grey-eyed Pallas crown of olive-leaves.'<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Wilde, "The Garden of Eros," Complete Works, p. 719.

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Lotus Leaves," Complete Works, p. 814.

<sup>3</sup>Oscar Wilde, "The Garden of Eros," Complete Works, p. 719.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 722.

<sup>5</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Santa Decca," Complete Works, p. 716.

Greek references are used very frequently too to link the atmosphere described. In the sad atmosphere of autumn, the story of Persephone at the moment she was leaving the world was revealed. Juno's throat is always associated with something white.

. . . , creamy meadow-sweet,  
Whiter than Juno's throat.<sup>1</sup>

The beautiful flowers were compared with the flowers in Greek mythology:

. . . , and those fond flowers  
which are  
Fairer than what Queen Venus trod upon<sup>2</sup>  
Beneath the pines of Ida, . . .

#### Oriental Countries

Compared to the exoticism of Greek beauty, the image of oriental countries appeared far less frequently. Only in a few poems does the poet reveal the exotic image of China, Egypt and India. In 'Ave Imperatrix,' he conveyed the exotic image of India and of Egypt as in 'Athanasia' in which Egyptian civilization was evoked. The images chosen by the poet are very characteristic, for example:

- lonely Himalayan height,<sup>3</sup>
- The almond-groves of Samarcand,  
Bokhara, where red lilies blow,  
And Oxus, by whose yellow sand  
The grave white-turbaned merchants go:<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Oscar Wilde, "The Garden of Eros," Complete Works, p. 718.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Oscar Wilde, "Ave Imperatrix," Complete Works, p. 711.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

- . . . the long dusty caravan  
Brings cedar wood and vermillion;<sup>1</sup>
- . . . lonely Arabs lying hid  
In the dim womb of some black pyramid.<sup>2</sup>

The Chinese panel is shown in 'Fantaisies Décoratives.' The image of 'a little ivory girl' with 'her raven hair,' the 'almond eyes' of her lover, 'a blue bowl' evoke oriental beauty which gives very exotic and aesthetic impressions.

### Catholicism

Wilde wrote many religious poems and some poems which are not essentially religious, but concern religion. Religion or Catholicism interested him because it gave him some new impressions just as other dandies were fascinated by it in the same way. However, sometimes his personae really had faith in God.

Surely there was a time I might have trod  
The sunlit heights, and from life's dissonance<sup>3</sup>  
Struck one clear chord to reach the ears of God<sup>3</sup>

His personae cried for God almost every time in difficult moments, especially, when tired of this weary world as Wilde wrote in 'E Tenebris'<sup>4</sup>:

Come down, O Christ, and help me! reach thy hand,  
For I am drowning in a stormier sea<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Athanasia," Complete Works, p. 747.

<sup>3</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Hélas!," Complete Works, p. 709.

<sup>4</sup>In fact, Wilde became a Catholic on his deathbed.

<sup>5</sup>Oscar Wilde, "E Tenebris," Complete Works, p. 731.



And another time when his persona cried to Mary:

Mother of Christ! O mystic wife!<sup>1</sup>  
My heart is weary of this life.

However, Catholicism is used in a more interesting way. The poet made the poems aesthetic by presenting the splendour and solemnity of the ritual. In 'Easter Day' and 'Rome Unvisited,' it seems that the aim of the poet in participating in the ritual was only to get aesthetic impressions. In 'Sonnet' too, aestheticism of pre-Christian and Hellenic ritual is presented though it is not a religious poem. His intention was rather to glorify the beautiful sight of Italy, but Catholicism is infused to render the poem more aesthetic. In addition, the use of some biblical correlations is very artistic, for example, in 'Rome Unvisited' describing the glory of Rome, the poet also put the biblical correlation into the poem:

O Roma, Roma, at thy feet  
I lay this barren gift of song!  
For, ah! the way is steep and long<sup>2</sup>  
That leads unto thy sacred street.

And in 'Sonnet' the biblical correlations appear in the same way:

Come when the splendid fulness of the moon  
Looks down upon the rows of golden sheaves,<sup>3</sup>  
And reap Thy harvest: we have waited long.

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Wilde, "San Miniato," Complete Works, p. 725.

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Rome Unvisited," Complete Works, p. 728.

<sup>3</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Sonnet," Complete Works, p. 730.

### Auditory Imagery

Music is a very important characteristic of the aesthetic or Art for Art's Sake poems. Most of the poets realized that music, above all the other arts, had the power of rendering, of conveying, a transcendental experience. Consequently, their effects tended towards making poetry approximate to music in powers of expression and suggestion as Poe had done in 'The Raven.' Many French Art for Art's Sake poets tried their best to infuse the musical quality. Their aim is not to tell a story or to define an idea like the Renaissance lyric poets, but to create an emotion or to convey an impression. Verlaine, in Art Poétique, declared: "de la musique avant toute chose."<sup>1</sup> His preoccupation is not to express anxiety or sentiment, but to find the alliance of the words, the rhythm, the sonority which can give the impression of anxiety. The poetry must be, first of all, the music, the harmony of sounds which make us dream. Rimbaud, too, wrote in a letter in 1877: "Tout est prose rimé."<sup>2</sup> Mallarmé's Un Coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira le Hasard is very difficult to understand because the poet aims firstly at the musical qualities. The words are arranged on the page in an odd way. He established a kind of parallel between the general movement of the ideas in the poem and the general development of its musical qualities. Wilde, too, was very aware of this quality. The letter written to Violet Fane in which Wilde criticized the poem of Frances Wynne showed this awareness:

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<sup>1</sup> quoted in Charles Chadwick, Symbolism, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

. . . Miss Wynne's 'Sea Gulls' is pretty and full of promise, but not finished, not perfect, too lax in metre, too vague in metrical treatment, too spasmodic . . .

. . . But she must remember that in the care of loose metres, we require the most wonderful music.<sup>1</sup>

He tried thus in his work to gain the musical value, for example, he wrote to Marian Willet, Monday 13 May, 1878, about his 'Magdalen Walks': ". . . I have tried, in the metre as well as the words, to mirror some of the swiftness and grace of the springtime."<sup>2</sup> And to Violet Hunt:

The poem I like best is "The Burden of Itys" and next to that "The Garden of Eros." They are the most lyrical, and I would sooner have any power or quality of <sup>3</sup>"song" writing than be the greatest sonnet writer since Petrarch.

Many poetic techniques are shown in the poems which prove his attempt. Some poems are intended to be written "For Music" as he wrote under the title, for example, 'Endymion,' 'Serenade,' 'From Spring Days to Winter.'

He chose "terza rima" for 'The Harlot's House' to evoke the image of the dancers dancing. The rhymes AAB, CCB, EEF, DDF . . . and iambic pentameter suggest the vivid steps of the dance. But in 'In the Forest,' the dance of the faun is suggested by different steps. The rhythm suggests that the dance is not so vivid as the previous one. It is rather smooth and the last line of each stanza evokes the impression of the repeated steps.

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<sup>1</sup>Rupert Hart-Davis, ed. The Letters of Oscar Wilde, p. 238.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 79.



He skips through the corses singing,  
And his shadow dances along,  
And I know not which I should follow,  
Shadow or song!

In 'Pan,' the poem consecrated to the loss of the music of Pan, God of music, the terza rima is used also. The rhymes are aba, bcb, cdc . . . which give some slightly different musical value from the terza rima in 'The Harlot's House.' It is very aesthetic to write such musical poetry to the God of music. Another complicated technique is used in this poem too. The refrain of the main ideas is repeated in every stanza out in different lines. In the first part which is composed of 6 stanzas the refrain is: a. "O goat-foot God of Arcady"<sup>2</sup>

b. "Ah, what remains to us for thee"<sup>3</sup>

These two lines are found regularly through this part according to the following chart:

<u>Stanza</u>	<u>line 1</u>	<u>line 2</u>	<u>line 3</u>
1 <sup>st</sup>	a	-	b
2 <sup>nd</sup>	-	-	a
3 <sup>rd</sup>	-	-	b
4 <sup>th</sup>	-	-	a
5 <sup>th</sup>	-	-	b
6 <sup>th</sup>	-	a	b

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Wilde, "In the Forest," Complete Works, p. 308.

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Pan," Complete Works, p. 312.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

And in the second part, the lines:

- a. "Ah, leave the hills of Arcady"<sup>1</sup>
- b. "This modern world hath need of thee."<sup>2</sup>

are repeated in the same procedure as the first part.

Anapaestic feet ( ∪ ∪ ∪ ) appearing evidently in 'Flower of Love' and in 'Chorus of Cloud Maidens' render the poems very musical. In 'Serenade,' we can find the correspondence between the sense and the sound. Iambic metre gives the impression of the moving boat and the rapidity of the metre emphasizes his lover's running away.

The western wind is blowing fair  
 Across the dark Aegean sea,  
 And at the secret marble stair  
 My Tyrian galley waits for thee.

. . .

The waning sky grows faint and blue,  
 It wants an hour still of day,  
 Aboard! aboard! my gallant crew,  
 O Lady mine, away! away!

For Wilde, as for other poets, rhythms and rhymes are the important factors which make the poems musical. Thus, he paid so much attention to the rhymes that sometimes he used some very archaic and strange words to provide strange sounds. The word 'wold' was used many times when he wanted it to rhyme with other words in [ɔld] like; gold, fold, cold, etc. But mostly, the rhymes give the positive effect rather than the negative, for example, in 'From the Spring Day to Winter' the rhymes

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 812-813.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Serenade," Complete Works, p. 749

are admirable and they make the poem so musical. Sometimes he used a very short line which he supposed would give musical value as in 'Canzonet.'<sup>1</sup> This sort of technique is suitable for the story of a young man who has neither rubies nor pearls to decorate the throat of his lover. The song is the only thing that he can offer her.

Auditory imagery is not conveyed only by the manifestation of music in the poems but there is also another kind which is created by the evocation of sound imagery as the sound of birds, of the songs, of some musical instrument. The sound of the birds appears most frequently. The image is rather descriptive and suggestive. The poet never used onomatopoeia to make it more natural and poetic:

- The lonely nightingale is heard.<sup>1</sup>

- The birds are singing for joy of the Spring's glad birth,<sup>2</sup>

And to create the pastoral atmosphere, he usually evoked the sound of the wind instrument like a reed and a flute. Many aesthetic sounds are presented frequently. The poet suggested the very sensitive sound like the murmur and the sound of spring and the whispering pine. He gave a very aesthetic personification of nature:

- And the plane to the pine-tree is whispering some tale of love,<sup>3</sup>  
Till it rustles with laughter and tosses its mantle of green,

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Wilde, "By the Arno," Complete Works, p. 726.

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Magdalen Walks," Complete Works, p. 746.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

- The wind piped drearily.<sup>1</sup>

There is also the exotic sound:

. . . murmurs of rivers nymph-haunted  
The songs of the sea-waves resound;<sup>2</sup>

The poet, being sensitive to the music, sometimes compares his persona's soul to the musical instrument:

To drift with every passion till my soul  
Is a stringed lute on which all winds can play,<sup>3</sup>

and in 'The Burden of Itys':

'Tis I, 'tis I, whose soul is as the reed  
Which has no message of its own to play.<sup>4</sup>

Those images recall to us the images Baudelaire used many times. Baudelaire liked to compare his heart to the musical instrument. His heart is compared to the drum when he was in sad impression.

Mon coeur, comme un tambour voilé<sup>5</sup>  
Va battant des marches funèbres.

#### Olfactory Imagery

Of all the perceptive imagery, olfactory is the imagery which interested Wilde the least. It is very strange that the poet did not appreciate this kind of aesthetic imagery as he should. Odours and

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Vita Nuova," Complete Works, p. 311.

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Chorus of Cloud Maidens," Complete Works, p. 316.

<sup>3</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Hélas!," Complete Works, p. 709.

<sup>4</sup>Oscar Wilde, "The Burden of Itys," Complete Works, p. 744.

<sup>5</sup>Baudelaire, Oeuvres Complètes, p. 16.

perfumes provide an aesthetic impression and one could be easily fascinated by it. Baudelaire in 'La Chevelure' confessed his love of perfume:

Comme d'autres esprits voguent sur la musique,  
Le mien ô mon amour! nage sur ton parfum.

Perfume has a very interesting and important role in Baudelaire's poems, for example, it gives him an impression of infinity, it evokes his past memories. Thanks to perfume, his soul flies to the distant domain or to the past in which he can find happiness. In the poems of Wilde, on the contrary, olfactory imagery plays a less important role than in the poems of Baudelaire. Generally, Wilde preferred other types of imagery. Olfactory imagery is not introduced obviously. The poet only suggested some scented flowers but he rarely developed it further, for example:

The oleander on the wall  
Grows crimson in the dawning light.<sup>2</sup>

- The trumpet-mouths of red convolvulus<sup>3</sup>
- And budding majoram which but<sup>4</sup> to kiss  
Would sweeten Cytheraea's lips.

The poet did not describe their magnificent or sweet smell nor show that he himself was fascinated by it. Rarely is perfume revealed. Mostly, the pastoral and natural smells are outstanding, such as, the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Oscar Wilde, "By the Arno," Complete Works, p. 726.

<sup>3</sup> Oscar Wilde, "The Garden of Eros," Complete Works, p. 713.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



smell of asphodel which "spread rich odours through our spring-tide air."<sup>1</sup>

A delicate odour is borne on the wings of the morning breeze,  
The odour of leaves and of grass, and of newly upturned earth.<sup>2</sup>

Exotic perfume is seldom presented. In 'Canzonet,' ambergris, a substance found floating in tropical seas, is mentioned; and in 'The Sphinx' there are many aesthetic and exotic odours:

Odorous with Syrian galbanum and smeared with  
Spikenard and with thyme.<sup>3</sup>

Although the mention of the olfactory imagery is very rare in his work, we can find some aesthetic use of this imagery, such as, in 'The Sphinx' the poet could perceive the smell of evening: "Sing to me of that odorous green eve."<sup>4</sup> and in 'The Burden of Itys' he gave correspondence to the different odours:

The blue-green beanfields yonder, tremulous  
With the last shower, sweeter perfume bring  
Through this cool evening than the odorous.  
Flame-jewelled censers the young deacons swing.<sup>5</sup>

#### Tactile Imagery

Although the sense of touch does not appear regularly or frequently in the work of Wilde, it is very remarkable in some poems, especially, in 'The Sphinx' and in 'Charmides.' There are many kinds of touch: the

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Athanasia," Complete Works, p. 747.

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Magdalen Walks," Complete Works, p. 746.

<sup>3</sup>Oscar Wilde, "The Sphinx," Complete Works, p. 836.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 834.

<sup>5</sup>Oscar Wilde, "The Burden of Itys," Complete Works, p. 736.

artistic touch of tissue and caress, the soft touch and sometimes the sickening touch of some rotten fruit, and the sexual touch. The touch of tissue is the most aesthetic one. Satin, silk, velvet, fur are mentioned frequently. Their soft quality is emphasized, for example, "soft rolls of linen,"<sup>1</sup> "flowing silk,"<sup>2</sup> "soft and silky fur."<sup>3</sup> Satin is associated with the eyes as he described the eyes of "Sphinx" as "eyes of satin rimmed with gold."<sup>4</sup> This image is similar to the image Baudelaire used: "fée aux yeux de velours."<sup>5</sup> The softness of cushions is mentioned in the work of Wilde as well as of Baudelaire. In Baudelaire's work, we find the following lines:

D'une main évantant ses seins.<sup>6</sup>  
Et son coude dans les coussins

and in Wilde's work, we find the similar imagery:

Lift up your large black satin eyes which are like  
cushions where one sinks!

The role of tissue is greater in the work of French poets, especially Baudelaire and Gautier whose influence on Wilde is very strong. Almost every sort of fragile and rough tissue is mentioned in the work

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Wilde, "The Sphinx," Complete Works, p. 839.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 837.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 833.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Baudelaire, Oeuvres Complètes, p. 34.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>7</sup>Oscar Wilde, "The Sphinx," Complete Works, p. 834.

of Baudelaire, for example, "des habits, mousselines ou velours,"<sup>1</sup> "la moire," "le crêpe," "la gaze," "tes souliers de satins,"<sup>2</sup> "tes charmants pieds de soie,"<sup>3</sup> "la suaire," "la ruche," etc. In the work of Gautier, too, these same images appeared: "Un flot de velours nacarat,"<sup>4</sup> "le blanc satin."

Wilde introduced many other kinds of soft touch: pulpy figs, a waxen honey-comb, the mossy well. These sorts of touch recall to us the imagery Gautier used when he compared many kinds of soft touch to the beauty of the skin of the girl:

De quelle moelle de roseau  
De quelle hostie de quel cierge<sup>5</sup>  
A-t-on fait le blanc de sa peau.

Also, the sickening touch of the mud is presented in the work of Wilde: oozy gold, slimy tears.

The caress is sometimes presented in an aesthetic way, but sometimes in an erotic one. Baudelaire found the beauty of the caress as he wrote in his poem: "Mère des souvenirs . . . Tu te rappelleras la beauté des caresses!"<sup>6</sup> Wilde, too, perceived its aesthetic effect. He evoked

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<sup>1</sup> Baudelaire, Oeuvres Complètes, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Théophile Gautier, Emaux et Camées, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> Baudelaire, Oeuvres Complètes, p. 34.

it in 'The Sphinx': "And let me touch those curving claws of yellow ivory and grasp."<sup>1</sup> Again, Wilde recaptured the parallel image Baudelaire used in 'Le Chat': "Lorsque mes doigts caressent à loisir ta tête et ton dos élastique."<sup>2</sup>

The touch is sometimes presented in an erotic way, for example:

- You kissed his mouth with mouths of flame.<sup>3</sup>
- And his nerves thrilled like throbbing violins  
     In exquisite pulsation, and the pain  
     Was such sweet anguish that he never drew  
     His lips from hers till overhead the lark of warning flew.<sup>4</sup>

### Harmony and Correspondence of Imagery

#### Harmony of Imagery

When Wilde evoked several kinds of imagery, he also made them harmonious because harmony is the artistic and poetic value at which every poet aims. Imagery plays a very important role in the poem as Caroline Spurgeon, the author of Shakespeare's Imagery, declared: "The image thus gives quality, creates atmosphere and conveys emotion in a way no description, however clear and accurate, can possibly do."<sup>5</sup> For the poets of the Art for Art's Sake School, imagery is usually used as the medium to convey the state of mind or as objective correlative in T. S. Eliot's terms. To convey emotions or to create atmosphere, the

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<sup>1</sup> Oscar Wilde, "The Sphinx," Complete Works, p. 833.

<sup>2</sup> Baudelaire, Oeuvres Complètes, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Oscar Wilde, "The Sphinx," Complete Works, p. 837.

<sup>4</sup> Oscar Wilde, "Charmides," Complete Works, p. 756.

<sup>5</sup> Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery, p. 9.

poet requires many images and more than that these images must be harmonious. Wilde in 'Ave Maria Gratia Plena,' accumulated much harmonious sad imagery to evoke the "supreme mystery of Love."<sup>1</sup>

And now with wondering eyes and heart I stand  
 Before this supreme mystery of Love:  
 A kneeling girl with passionless pale face,  
 An angel with a lily in his hand,  
 And over both withoutstretched wings the Dove.<sup>1</sup>

'Endymion' is the poem concerning the cry of the shepherdess to the Goddess of the moon to give her lover back to her. The imagery shows a different state of her hope, crying to the moon: "O rising moon! O Lady moon."<sup>2</sup> Light and sound imagery are vivid:

The apple trees are hung with gold,  
 And birds are loud in Arcady,  
 The sheep lie bleating in the fold,<sup>3</sup>  
 The wild goat runs across the wold,

By contrast at the end of the poem, when she is in despair, all kinds of imagery are diminished:

The falling dew is cold and chill,  
 And no bird sings in Arcady,  
 The little fauns have left the hill,  
 Even the tired daffodil  
 Has closed its gilded doors, and<sup>4</sup> still  
 My lover comes not back to me.

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<sup>1</sup> Oscar Wilde, "Ave Maria Gratia Plena," Complete Works, p. 727.

<sup>2</sup> Oscar Wilde, "Endymion," Complete Works, p. 750.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Harmony of imagery is used in the same way to create a certain atmosphere. 'Harmonie du Soir' of Baudelaire grouped visual, olfactory and auditory imagery in sad harmony to create sad atmosphere. The images of the setting sun, the fading perfume of flowers and the dying note of violin are revealed. As in 'By the Arno' of Wilde, he juxtaposed these different images to reinforce calm atmosphere.

Only the leaves are gently stirred  
 By the soft breathing of the gale,  
 And in the almond-scented vale,<sup>1</sup>  
 The lonely nightingale is heard.

This kind of juxtaposition appeared frequently in the work of Wilde. Sometimes, he accumulated sad and pale imagery and sometimes vivid and gay to gain different effects.

#### Correspondence of Imagery

Correspondence is an analogy of different elements or domains. It is rather aesthetic than philosophical. It appeared outstandingly in the work of the French Art for Art's Sake poets, for example, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud, Mallarmé. One poem of Baudelaire entitled 'Correspondences' is very famous because we can find the relation of many different sensations: the perfume, the touch, the sound, the colour. The analogy is very aesthetic:

- Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,  
 Doux comme les haubois, verts comme les prairies,

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Wilde, "By the Arno," Complete Works, p. 726.

<sup>2</sup>Baudelaire, Ouvrages Complètes, p. 11.



- Son parfum doux comme un secret  
Dans les solitudes profondes.<sup>1</sup>

The similar analogy appeared in the work of Wilde as well. In 'Canzonet' he compared the music to other kinds of imagery:

For I would feed  
Thine ears with melody,  
Who art more fair  
Than fairest fleur de lys,  
More sweet and rare<sup>2</sup>  
Than sweetest ambergris.

It seems that Wilde appreciated the aesthetic value of correspondence and tried to take example from the French poets. But unfortunately, correspondence appears more rare in his work while it is frequent in the work of the French writers because it is the most aesthetic element that we can find in the Art for Art's Sake School.

Wilde's use of imagery derived from the French School is less artistic in comparison with the French poets. Although it is evident that he appreciated the artistic value of all kinds of imagery mentioned, he did not exercise them thoroughly. Visual imagery is accentuated mostly while the olfactory is mentioned far less. More than that, the correspondence of imagery which is the most aesthetic element, that we can find in the works of the Art for Art's Sake poets, appears very rarely in the poems of Wilde.

The French influence is infused not only in the poems of Wilde, but also in his novel. In The Picture of Dorian Gray, the influence remains very distinct.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Wilde, "Canzonet," Complete Works, p. 207.