

Imagination on the Element of Soil in André Gide's *the Immoralist***Sara Soroosh****MA Student of French Language and Literature, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad,
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The current research aims at exploring André Gide's imagination by analyzing the images created by the imagination of the protagonist of Gide's *the Immoralist*. The story begins with the illness of the father, continues with the illness of Michel, and eventually, ends with the illness and death of Marceline. The analysis of the images addresses the question whether the protagonist of the story can overcome his fear of death using his imagination over the element of soil. To analyze, Bachelard's (1960) model of criticism is used which is based on the four basic elements of nature: water, soil, air, and fire. A preliminary analysis of the images indicates that, the soil plays the pivotal role in the imagination of the writer. Bachelard (1960) believes that, every writer's imagination draws on one of the basic elements of nature; imagination for literary creation needs to find the essential element). In this research, images, resulting from imagination on the element of soil, are analyzed and discussed.

2. Background of the Study

Earlier research on Gide's *the Immoralist* has mostly addressed the moral aspects of the protagonist, while none has studied the effect of the element of soil on the imagination of the writer.

3. Images of Soil on Gide's *the Immoralist*

Initially, images resulting from imagination on hard materials such as iron, stone, and wood are analyzed. Does imagination on such materials indicates the dynamicity and liveliness of the individual? Does it help overcome or reduce fear and anxiety? The images resulted from imagination on hard materials represent the

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power of imagination of the writer—he takes advantage of imagination on hardness of soil elements in nature to organize the furious and anxious world of the protagonist of the story.

3.1 Images of Hard Materials

According to Bachelard (1960), intentional imagination is stimulated by words which inspire hardness. During the illness, Michel cannot stand the coldness of the winter or the coolness of the spring. Michel's unbalanced soul, his inner mood under the influence of hard materials, is of considerable interest. As the writer puts, the cold infiltrates Michel's body and hardens it like marble, and he stays motionless because of the cold. His emotional and mental balance is disturbed to the extent that despite the warmth he shivers with the sweat on his body. Bachelard also classifies palm tree or oak as terrestrial plants under hard materials. The struggle of the intricate roots of the tree against the hardness of the soil to escape it is in fact a path to salvation. But the nature of knots in the wood leads to contradictions in the mind of the imaginer. In *the Immoralist*, the special feature of the bark of the tree, that is the knots on the trunk and the hardness of the wood attracts Michel. The distinctive scent of this wood in the air affects him, as if the tree bark would induce Michel to wake up early in the morning to touch it. This wood is the result of a past struggle in which the tree root had defeated the soil, and it now transfers the energy to Michel. The protagonist, owing to the energy of the tree, is reborn and finds the treatment for his illness. In all his works, Gide likens the trunk of trees, due to their strength and liveliness, to the physique of young men. The nakedness of the body represents the accessible nature with which one can directly communicate by touching it.

3.2 Imagination on the Form of Dough

Bachelard (1960) considers dough the combination of the two elements of water and soil and imagination on images of water and soil actually reflects the interaction between these two elements. Such images result from a perfect dough or an imperfect and defective one. The relationship between contrasting materials such as water and soil, in fact, reveals the struggle between these two elements. Water has the solubility and soil has the absorption ability. The struggle of these two elements creates material and dynamic images and clearly reveals the masochistic and sadistic behavior of these two elements. Any images from imagination on the combination of the two elements of water and soil is indicative of a contrasting dichotomy. On imagination on the two elements of water and soil the inner-dough (i.e., substance) of the writer is also considered. This dough is at times a perfect one or at other times a hard and defective one. Imagination on a perfect dough softens roughness. Such a perfect and flawless dough can be associated with the soul of Michel when walking in the park; Michel sees the true

nature of clay which is mixed with water and regains his mental balance. Such an effect of this scene is even palpable within his soul.

3.1 Images of Soft Materials

A psychoanalysis based on the images of materials investigates the fall owing to the pull of instincts towards the rotten. Bachelard (1984) points out that, it is possible to achieve excellence even out of rotten and gooey materials (). Excretion of reeking sputum is one of the symptoms of Tuberculosis from which Michel was suffering. At first reeking sputum is excreted, but later it turns into a daily and effective routine for the betterment of his illness. In the story of *the Immoralist*, Michel is an unsuccessful person and represents an imperfect dough. As indicated in the Bible and other sacred books, human beings consist of two elements of water and soil. The inconsistency of Michel's soul follows from the nature of his inner dough. He has faced conflicts in his own identification. He shaves his beard, and yet gets anxious at such a superficial change. Suppressed dreams of the individual lies in the mud and dark soft soil. The hard land in fact reveals the *illusio* of the lost values. Yet, this soil can help one excel. Michel regains power and balance in the muddy swamp. Soft mud is the remains of green plantation which has now lost its livelihood, yet has kept its positive effects. Michel's new life begins as he is baptized in soft soil and mud.

4. Conclusion

In the images that were related to the hardness of soil, the inspiring words of hard materials, resulted in the images which also influenced the soul of the imager. In the analysis of the images of dough, the image of the silk scarf and blood was a representation of the struggle between water and soil and the conflicting emotions of the protagonist. The writer intrigues the reader using this image. The analysis of the images of dough shows that the contact with the nature heals the Michel's soul and he regains his health. Although Michel apparently regains his health, there are still conflicts and contradictions in his emotions. In the analysis of the images of the soft materials of soil, the inner dough of Charles is soft and unimpressionable; that is why his sense of friendship changes to hatred. Michel suffers from conflicts about his own identity. In contact with soil, the protagonist finds a medicine to overcome his contradictions. He finds stability and consistency in direct contact with the nature, and by taking advantage of soil in the nature he achieves spiritual stability, while his doubts about his decisions are repeatedly noted until the end of the story.

Key Words: Gide, Bachelard, reverie, soil, hardness, paste, softness.

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