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Philosophy of India

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Memory and Imagination from Antonio de Nicolas's Moksha Smith

Artha: Material Comfort/Physical Need

Memory

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of a Dream

“His dream was shattered again,  
his mother spent the day  
killing lice, boiling his clothes,  
begging the little boy to stay home”  
Moksha Smith, pg. 45

It's the view in a bedroom of the window and the rain and the object in front of them: a bird in a cage. I stand and stare at the fluttering creature, with tightness in my throat; with my eyebrows drawn together – will it escape? The cage is open; what if it flies into the storm?

I blink and with the force of a push fall into the creature's perception: it wasn't an other all along; it was I that kissed action's wings and fluttered off into the discovery of *out there*.

Comments:

The combination of the word “dream,” and the phrase, “begging the little boy to stay home” made me think of a dream I had before leaving for college. The image of Artha at its completion came to me first: I with the view of a dark room, a stormy night, and a bird fluttering about in her cage. Then, after the initial image, I paused from reading Moksha Smith and consciously re-dreamed the dream.

Memory

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of Imagination

“The world upside down”

Moksha Smith, pg. 49

“Liz’s toilet is upside down because she’s got the top of her head on the floor and she’s looking between her legs. She feels blood rush to her face and her eyes aren’t letting her see so she sits up and rubs them with her fingertips. She looks at the inside of her window and sees it’s gotten noticeably more noticeable since she arrived. Her smudgy hand prints and cheek prints are all over it and she smiles because she knows she’s here.” (An excerpt from *Is* by April Fisher)

“Why break through walls  
search for the inside of souls  
if people are as available  
and replaceable as books?”  
Moksha Smith, pg. 126-7

“Liz is BenKamia fading back to Liz. She’s Liz again and she pounds her hands against the floor. She wonders if it was her that spilled people all over the page or someone else. She wonders if she’s spilled all over some page. People are just books in other people’s minds, she thinks, but to her she is and is exactly what she is, isn’t she? Liz puckers out her lips and crumples her nose. She crawls and then curls into her wonderful corner.” (An excerpt from *Is* by April Fisher)

Comments:

As a writer, recent stories always settle in my brain, waiting to find new discoveries that relate to it. So, it is of no surprise to me that in reading Moksha Smith, several statements or words activated memories in me of my most recent work, *Is*. It is relevant that they came to me while reading the section of physical needs (Artha), because any serious writer will profess that writing indeed is a necessity that the when without, the body reacts violently to.

Two examples of my writing that Moksha Smith reminded me of are above. The first is particularly intriguing to me because it was only two words, “upside down,” which triggered for me the memory of my words: first in my thought was the words visualized in front of me, and then I grasped hold of them and recalled the picture I had given them during my writing of them.

The second is intriguing because I first remembered an idea – people being books – before I created any images. This memory for me was not an instantaneous thing, but a recollection I actually had to work for. It was somewhat difficult for me to remember not only where in my story I mention people as books, but also the exact situation Liz is in when it is mentioned.

## Dharma: Right Action

### Memory

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of a state of mind

“It was premature to think of God.  
My soul was trapped in another war.”  
Moksha Smith, pg. 112

“There is a God,” she says to me.

My stomach settles between hunger and uneasiness and my body yawns for the simple breath that comes with space and she says to me, “You must believe. It’s time. Hurry,” and the walls inch their way around my body.

In a tantrum I turn to the door but my self is already there with arms grasping the doorframe to keep me in. I’ve never been outside, and she captures my body in her eyes and shouts, “Believe! God is!”

Trembling, I fall against the wall – it’s right next to me now; all four of them are. The flat panels enclose me and grow faces and they yell, “Believe! Believe! It’s time,” until in one last move, they crush my body into itself.

### Comments:

The statement in Moksha Smith quoted above reminded me of a state of mind I was once in. Although in my past I was unable to see this state of mind, through memory I can live the experience again with different, slightly distant eyes. Through memory I can now see that trying to commit myself to Christianity before I had been exposed to the limitless ideas and ideals of the world was essentially to close myself into a box.

I was surprised to find that this too seemed to fit appropriately in its category. The Dharma section is on right action and my state of mind reactions were the antithesis of this. Therefore, through my wrong action I was able to understand Dharma a little more.

## Kama: Pleasure

### Memory

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without Memory

“Silence makes life so soft,  
 so tender, so slow  
 to move, rock, wave  
 listen to the world of noise  
 without water around,  
 bend to rhythms of the heart  
 holding the joy of life...”  
 Moksha Smith, pg. 160

I can convince myself of it logically. All human beings start life in a womb. I am a human being. Therefore, I was once in a woman’s belly. But this only satisfies the left of me. The rest goes wanting.

I can remember. Almost. I close my eyes when I lie next to him. Here: It’s the heartbeat and the surrounding warmth of an other. It’s the unwritten and unspeakable found in a passage of a poem about being in the womb and its silence. I can remember, while nearing sleep, that this is a secure place and unknowing is. Ceiling fans and their rhythmic hum. Another body and our growing heat. Knowing isn’t here. Lungs filling and a heart beating. All that is is is.

### Comments:

Kama is pleasure. Of all the pleasures of the world, one of the greatest simply must be the security of being in mother’s womb.

## Moksha: Enlightenment

### Memory

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for the Future

“A life with you is  
the original life of Paradise,  
without you I keep looking  
at the empty road,  
neither alive,  
nor with the memory of having lived.”  
Moksha Smith, pg. 286

The two of us  
are one and one. And  
one.

Living.

You are new to me, *you*.  
And so in my hands,  
memories of us are iridescent  
and translucent.  
These lives are memories for the future.

### Comments:

It seems romantic love is an active part of enlightenment. These are two things I have had little experience with. The only memories I have that come to me from reading this section are recent ones that I doubt have a full grasp on yet. Maybe I never will. They are too amazing. They are so recent that they are not regular memories yet. But, if I am asked this time next year, perhaps I could tell?

## The Forest

The forest is an unfamiliar place in which one's self dies in order to live. It is an in between state – in between a life lived in vain and a life lived “with the music of the skies” (225). There are a few main doctrinal lessons that are found in it, which were revealed to me through Moksha Smith by Antonio de Nicolas. These are the absence of self and the presence of love.

Discovered in the forest is a plethora of questions. This is evident to me by the questioning nature of many of the poems in the forest section of Moksha Smith. There are so many questions because the forest itself is a state of mind (“neural paths/you are able to open in your brain” pg. 237) in which a self inquiry takes place. It is here that a person will “dismember that I” (227). Being in the forest is leading to the discovery that there is no I.

The other main doctrinal lesson which I believe is portrayed as the most crucial is love. Weaved throughout the entire book, including the forest, is the presence of love. In the forest it is actualized. What is important is this: “There is no other story/but the single act of love” (249). Love is depicted as a part of self discovery and confusion and hope in Moksha Smith. De Nicolas clearly defines the great lesson:

Your home is in mauve,  
return to the goddess of the sea,  
green is the color of the stories  
in your dreams,  
let them rise to the surface  
and dissolve in one  
single act of love. (249)

Works Cited

de Nicolas, Antonio. Moksha Smith. New York: Writers Club Press, 2001.