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“<RE>Presenting Memory as the Exilic Author’s Eternal Landscape”

The dire need to keep memory alive is at the heart of every true piece of exilic literature. Literature exists as the purest form of preservation known to man, and exilic writers count on their literature to provide eternal sanctuary to their lives and their thoughts. In the same way that a paleontologist might wonder at the Le Brea tar pits, or a biologist might gaze into a test tube, an author can marvel at the ability of volumes of Shakespeare and Norton anthologies to give testament to the human condition. When crafted by a passionate author, writing becomes more than mere letters on a page, each one representing a different sound, and each group of sounds forming an audio symbol of something that exists in the world. Writing has become the manner in which a thought, whim, desire, rant, or quandary can be formulated in a writer’s mind, travel down the length of his arm and through the tip of his pen, to find itself trapped on an inky page until a merciful reader casts his glance upon the words and releases them from their prison, so that they can travel from the window that is his eye into the essence that is his soul. It is the force of memory that drives the pens of exilic writers across pages that are written upon miles away from home, sometimes in hiding, and sometimes in the fear that it may be the last word they write. While more obvious features such as the political nature or the sense of alienation exilic writers often face during their lifetimes is strongly evident in the genre, this subtle and humane sense of memory is just as apparent and necessary. The presence of memory in the writings of exilic writers is a tenant of the genre that should be taken into consideration when distinguishing a text as “exilic.”

The Iranian born Azar Nafisi, now in exile in the United States, entitled the first work she wrote in exile Reading Lolita in Tehran. In this memoir, Nafisi mentions the function of memory no more than five pages into the text. She states, “That room, which I never paid much attention to at the time, has gained a different status in my mind’s eye now that it has become the precious object of memory” (7). With this early admission, Nafisi sets a tone that reveres the power of memory and its ability to make things precious in her mind. One such thing which Nafisi mentions as being precious is her ability to recall Iran’s past before the revolution. It was perhaps this ability to remember how good things were in the face of how terrible they had become that made Iran’s state of affairs so unbearable for Nafisi. She has the following to say on this topic:

These students, like the rest of their generation, were different from my generation in one fundamental aspect. My generation complained of a loss, a void in our lives that was created when our past was stolen from us, making us exiles in our own country. Yet we had a past to compare with the present; we had memories of what had been taken away. [...] This generation had no past. Their memory was of a half-articulated desire [...]. (76)

According to Nafisi, the memories held by each generation provide the grounds for what makes them so different from one another. Common memories unite a group of people in a way that makes them distinguishable from another group, and in the case of Nafisi, her memory allowed her to see the contrast between the Iran of her childhood and the Iran of her adult life. This ability to remember two versions of the same country allowed Nafisi the insight to criticize and eventually flee from the oppression she felt victim to.

Another passage from Nafisi's memoirs that admits the power of memory in her life as an exile is as follows:

I had a feeling that day that I was losing something, that I was mourning a death that had not yet occurred. I felt as if all things personal were being crushed like small wildflowers to make way for a more ornate garden, where everything would be tame and organized. I had never felt this sense of loss when I was a student in the States. In all those years, my yearning was tied to the certainty that home was mine for the having, that I could go home at any time I wished. It was not until I had reached home that I realized the true meaning of exile. As I walked those dearly beloved, dearly remembered streets, I felt I was squashing those memories underfoot. (145)

This passage provides for the reader possible insight into why Nafisi chose to exile herself in the United States. It seems that it was only after her time in the States that she was truly able to identify herself as an outsider in her homeland. The impending doom she feels is perhaps foreshadowing of the difficult decision she would later make to leave her homeland permanently. Her beloved memories were damaged in the face of her liberating American experience and the revolutionized state of Iran. Nafisi condemns the children of the Iranian revolution, declaring "The revolution must have meant many things to them—mainly power, and access. But they were also the usurpers, who had been admitted to the university and given power not of their own merit or hard work but because of their ideological affiliations. *This, neither they nor we could forget*" (251 italics added). The power of memory by those in favor of and opposed to the revolution is made clear by Nafisi's own admission throughout Reading Lolita In Tehran. For Nafisi specifically, however, her memory gave her the power to see the wrongs being committed around her, and her need to live and write in a free country.

Nafisi ends her book with an image of working through her memories in order to write an accurate account of her experience in Iran. Her friend offers her the following advice on the project:

You will not be able to write about Austen without writing about us, about this place where you rediscovered Austen. You will not be able to put us out of your head. Try, you'll see. The Austen you know is so irretrievably linked to this place, this land and these trees. You don't think it was the same Austen you read with Dr. French—it was Dr. French, wasn't it? Do you? This is the Austen you read here, in a place where the film censor is nearly blind and where they hang people in the streets and put a curtain across the sea to segregate men and women. (338)

These images relayed to Nafisi represent many of the memories she will always have about Iran, and how these memories will forever affect how she writes and reads. This private nature of literature provides numerous readings and interpretations of the images in a text, and such images are, as Nafisi puts it, "those scenes which, while happening in front of one's eyes, have already required the quality not just of a dream, but of a memory of a dream" (250).

Just as Azar Nafisi pays homage to the power of memory in her memoir, so does Salman Rushdie, the Indian author who lives in exile in England, in his personal essays. His essay

“Imaginary Homelands” is largely concerned with memory and the role it plays in his relationship with his homeland. Unlike Nafisi, however, whose memory cements the fact that she does not belong in Iran, Rushdie is plagued by his memory because he has come to the realization, “[...] it’s my present that is foreign, and that the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the midst of lost time” (9). While Nafisi left Iran by her own will, Rushdie was forced out of his own country for the sake of his life. As the result of the fatwah that was issued in response to his novel The Satanic Verses, Rushdie did not have the freedom to go home to the land he was born in. In this way, Rushdie exists in the eternal state of “foreigner,” since he will never return to his homeland. As a result, Rushdie’s memories are a source of loss for him, while Nafisi’s come across as empowering. Nevertheless, aspects of memory influence his writing just as much as Nafisi’s. For example, Rushdie relies upon his memory to align himself with other writers in his condition. He argues that “the past is a country from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is part of our common humanity,” and it is this common ground that allows him to “speak properly and concretely on a subject of universal significance and appeal” (12). Rushdie also claims that, “It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt” (10).

This “urge to reclaim” prompts Rushdie to create for himself “imaginary homelands,” since he is rendered incapable “of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost” by his exile (10). Rushdie includes his construction of an “imaginary homeland” in his novel Midnight’s Children, and confesses “[...] what I was actually doing was a novel of memory about memory, so that my India was just that: ‘my’ India, a version and no more than one version of all the hundreds of millions of possible versions” (10). This personal inclusion of imaginary forces seems to indicate that for Rushdie, a relationship with memory allows for a personal relationship with his writing. Perhaps therapeutic, Rushdie writes into existence what he prefers to remember about his India, and notes in his essay “Censorship” that “mercifully, memory is a censor, too” (37). Perhaps a bit naive, Rushdie also pays homage to these constructions, declaring that “The broken mirror may be as valuable as the one which is supposedly unflawed” (11). His memories are broken and incongruous, just as the pieces of a broken mirror are shattered. And while they are damaged, they still serve the purpose of reflection, only in a more fragmented state. In an effort to assert the value of his “broken” memories, Rushdie insists that “The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were *remains*; fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numerous qualities” (12). Rushdie considers his memories to be valuable finds made even more valuable by the fact that they are rare. He then brings his very specific memories full circle by employing the broken mirror as “a useful tool with which to work in the present” (12).

Rushdie goes on in his essay “Imaginary Homelands” to quote fellow exilic writer Milan Kundera on the concept of memory: “The struggle of man against power, is the struggle of memory against forgetting” (14). This quote resonates quite powerfully for Rushdie because all he will ever have of his India are his memories. Since he cannot return, he must fight against his human tendency to forget, because if he does, he has lost the power struggle. It is perhaps in fear of this struggle that Rushdie takes such great pains to promote his “broken shards” as being as valuable as whole memory, because he knows after some time, no matter how hard he may try, this will be all he has left. In this way, his character Saleem seems to be a literary recreation of himself:

This is why I made my narrator, Saleem, suspect in his narration; his mistakes are the mistakes of a fallible memory compounded by quirks of character and of circumstance, and his vision is fragmentary. It may be that when the Indian writer who writes from outside India tries to reflect that world, he is obliged to deal in broken mirrors, some whose fragments may have been irretrievably lost. (11)

While Nafisi and Rushdie express their relationship with memory in an autobiographical fashion, Milan Kundera, yet another exilic writer, addresses the force of memory in his novel Slowness, which was written in exile in Paris. Just as Nafisi and Rushdie differ in their accounts, so does Kundera. While Nafisi is empowered by memory and Rushdie is plagued by it, Kundera explores memory as a way to “impos[e] form on a period of time” (38). Kundera writes that “what is formless cannot be grasped, or committed to memory,” so in this author’s case, memory is the medium by which our past experiences are made accessible to our own selves. He further asserts that we can control how we remember things by how fast or slow we move through time:

There is a secret bond between slowness and memory, between speed and forgetting. Consider this utterly commonplace situation: a man is walking down the street. At a certain moment, he tries to recall something, but the recollection escapes him. Automatically, he slows down. Meanwhile, a person who wants to forget a disagreeable incident he has just lived through starts unconsciously to speed up his pace, as if he were trying to distance himself from a thing still too close to him in time. (39)

This concept of slowness creates a foundation for the entire novel, which juxtaposes two scenes of courtship against one another. By the novel’s end, Kundera provides his reader with an image of how devastating it can be “when we rush to sensual pleasure,” and “blur all the delights along the way” (37). While at face value this novel seems to rest upon theories of hedonism and “the art of staying as long as possible in a state of arousal,” there are deeper lessons to be learned that reveal Kundera’s ultimate theme which encourages the slowness of memory.

Kundera moves beyond the realm of sensual pleasure when he puts the following words in the mouth of an anonymous gentleman at an entomologist's convention: “You seem to regret, dear sir, that time marches on. So go back! How about to the twelfth century, would you like that? But when you get there you’ll start protesting against the cathedrals, as some modern barbarism! So go back further still! Go back to the apes! No modernity to threaten you there [...]” (84). This man appears for only two pages of the text, is unnamed, yet he delivers a monologue that ties in strongly to Kundera’s representation of time and memory in the text. He is blandly described as “A young man in eyeglasses, wearing a three-piece suit [...]” (83). Why is this? Essentially, this man is timeless himself, with no distinguishable features or attributes to date him, and without these constraints of time he is free to speak the truth. In this case, the truth being asserted is that “our period is obsessed by the desire to forget, and it is to fulfill that desire that it gives over to the demon of speed; it picks up the pace to show us that it no longer wishes to be remembered; that it is tired of itself; sick of itself; that it wants to blow out the tiny trembling flame of memory” (135). Kundera employs this juxtaposition of time periods to point out what the unnamed gentleman refers to as “barbaric,” and that is mankind’s tendency over time to speed up, technologize, and liberate himself to the point that he can’t sit back and enjoy life moment to moment. Essentially, man very often gives into the temptation to become a self-

destructive machine, always in a state of discontent, no matter how “advanced,” “modern,” or “civilized” he or his times may be. It is not in our rush to the future that we can find satisfaction, but in the slow indulgence of life around us. The anonymous gentlemen's profession speaks of man's tendency to fall back on accusations of our ancestor's primitive nature, when in reality they were more human than us: they were able to *remember*.

Kundera ends his novel with the following charge to his reader: “I beg you, friend, be happy. I have the vague sense that on our capacity to be happy hangs our only hope” (156). Kundera uses this novel to teach his “friends” that if we do not rush through life, thus destroying our memories, we just might find happiness. He warns that “When things happen too fast, nobody can be certain about anything, about anything at all, not even himself,” and if we can't be certain about ourselves, well then what can we be certain about? (135). These views on memory in regard may stem from experiences Kundera had while in exile. Kundera believed that the American form of journalism, for example, was representative of the sort of speeding up that resulted in the loss of memory. Kundera felt that American journalism oversimplified and quickened the human experience, as opposed to “cultural thinking,” which existed along the lines of his theories on the slowness of memory (“Milan Kundera”). Since cultural thinking was slower, it allowed those who participated a chance to see the world in all of its complexity. It is no wonder that Kundera decided to stop giving interviews after complaints of being “misunderstood;” he did not want to contribute to this group forgetfulness towards humanity (“Milan Kundera”).

Memory is truly a human quality. The fact that its discussion and preservation has been adopted by exilic writers seems to rest on the fact that their turbulent existence allows them to see the utter importance of remembering our history. These writers do not have the convenience of returning home to look at pictures, visit old friends, or walk down familiar streets; instead they only have what is left in their mind to provide the comforts of home. These writers are most familiar with what it means to experience loss, and this loss provides a lesson in nostalgia and the desire for things long past. For the genre of exilic writing as a whole, it seems that this presence of memory, (and not just memories!), promotes a sense of preservation for mankind; the exilic homage to memory implies a charge to every reader to keep mankind alive in his mind. Nafisi “steals” the following quote from Humbert in *Lolita*, and I will now steal it from her; “I need you, dear reader, to imagine us, for we won't really exist if you don't” (6). The true art of literature is that it can only thrive in the mind of a willing reader. And the true art of memory is that it can only be preserved in the mind of a willing subject. The true “literary exile” will try to make such a subject out of every one of us.

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Steve Pedersen

“Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”: A Burkean/Ecocritical Reading”

Man is
the symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal
.....
separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own mak-
ing
.....
and rotten with perfection. (Burke 1, 2, 4, 5, 7)

Robert Frost’s “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” elucidates Burke’s theory of “Man” as being “rotten with perfection” and shows how “perfection” (16), as an internal motive, is an ecocritical disease in the mindset of twentieth-century modern man¹, an era marked by advancements in technology and industry. Few scholars have analyzed Robert Frost’s poetry from a Burkean perspective; the last to do so was Richard Poirier who, in 1982, examined the Emersonian influence in Burke’s theory of words and their relation to reality. My paper instead, uses a combined approach of ecocriticism and Burke’s theory of man in his essay “Definition of Man.” Kenneth Burke (1897 – 1993) was a literary and social critic of the twentieth century. During the Depression, Burke experienced first-hand the devastating effects of a society unchecked by its own technological and industrial advancements. Within Burke’s early works, such as *Counter-Statement* and *Permanence and Change*, William Rueckert and other Burkean scholars have argued that ecocriticism as a field of study was founded.

Reading this poem from the vantage of Burke’s theory of man, the unnamed speaker is driven by “perfection.” It is an internal will and force that keeps the speaker unsettled in the few moments that he stops to watch the woods fill up with snow. This internal will is made evident as he consciously strives after the “promises” of tomorrow — “promises” he has “to keep.” From an ecocritical standpoint, this pastoral poem reveals modern man’s indifference and detachment from nature; the poem is symptomatic of humanity’s materialistic relationship with nature. Only the speaker, horse, and owner of the woods are written about in personal terms. Everything else, such as the “woods” and “frozen lake,” is described as impersonal and inanimate objects that exist for ownership and pleasure of viewing.

Frost’s words and poetic descriptions work to impose a unique image and feeling in the reader; the poem is full of subtle dichotomies that create tensions which at the end of the poem prompts the unnamed speaker to push on, and gives the reader a sense of conclusion. Although clear signs of separation between the speaker and nature exist, I believe that through the silence and inaction of the speaker a symbiotic relationship and ecological harmony with nature is perceived possible for humanity. Yet for this to occur, the “promises” we make for the future must include a greater understanding and appreciation of our relationship with, and responsibility toward, nature.

HUMAN PERFECTION as ENTELECHY

In order to understand the meaning of Burke's assertion that "Man is . . . rotten with perfection" (16), it is important to note the influence that Aristotle's idea of "entelechy" had on Burke; Burke himself acknowledges this influence in "The Definition of Man":

. . . the Aristotelian concept of the 'entelechy,' the notion that each being aims at the perfection natural to its kind (or, etymologically, is marked by a "possession of telos within"). . . . we are confining our use of the principle to the realm of symbolic action. (17)

In short, man has an internal will, or "telos" (teleology), that Burke considers a key factor in his defining attribute of man. Man is, as Burke exhorts, driven to "perfect" his own state of being through the realm of "symbolic action" (a Burkean term that refers to the use of language with a purpose or intent). What then is the "symbolic action" found in this poem? A close analysis of the form and language is required in beginning to formulate an answer to this question.

FROST'S FORM

In his biography of Robert Frost, Jay Parini writes: "'Stopping by Woods' represents the *perfection* of Frost's art in the straight lyric mode, his 'best bid for remembrance,' as he told Louis Untermeyer. He remarked to Reginald Cook that it contained 'all I ever knew'" (my emphasis 212). To my knowledge, no scholar has unearthed the fact that the form of the poem is written as a "Rubaiyat,"² also referred to as "Omar Khayyam quatrain" (Cuddon 612). This is an ancient form of Persian poetry written in quatrains of tetrameter or pentameter. The traditional form of an "interlocking rubaiyat" has a rhyme scheme AABA, BBCB, CCDC, and a final quatrain of DDAD (Turco 106). Frost slightly modifies this form with a DDDD rhyme scheme in the final stanza. The last four lines become enthematic of the modern era — the rhyme is repetitive, persistent and unrelenting — thus giving the poem its momentum:

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep. (13-16)

In this final stanza, an unquestionable will is exerted in the speaker's words for pushing on. He has "promises to keep"; whether they are for his family, friends, himself, or work, we are never fully told. Yet to the unnamed speaker, these "promises" are more important than the time spent in the woods. These "promises" reflect the uncompromising internal drive that Burke characterizes as "perfectionist."

LANGUAGE as TELEOLOGICAL

Similar to man's drive for perfection, language, as Burke describes it, is also inherently motivated by a teleological drive for "perfection"; its very existence and utility is designed to most accurately name, explicate, elucidate, and describe a given reality. This teleological quality embedded in language influences man's "use," "mis-use," and "making" of it. As mentioned earlier, man, already being driven by an internal motive for perfection, uses language as a means to attain that end. Yet the language and vocabulary a person chooses to use will simultaneously motivate him or her by defining what those "means" and "ends" will be. Put another way, the

words we use to talk about the environment will have a motivating force in our fulfillment of that language. Therefore, if we have a detached and materialistic vocabulary for describing the environment, we will be motivated to fulfill the implications of that vocabulary.

In an article titled “Perfection and the Bomb: Nuclear Weapons, Teleology, and Motives,” Barry Brummett explains Burke’s philosophy: “the vocabularies that people use are capable of extension and elaboration, and the motive to extend and elaborate to the limit of a vocabulary is perfectionist” (86). Brummett suggests that the diction, nomenclature and terms we choose to use, have a motivating and perforce-like drive in our actions for fulfillment. As Brummett implies in his article’s title, our symbol systems have the ability to motivate men to total annihilation, specifically by the way in which we talk about “nuclear weapons.” In other words, to talk about nuclear weapons as a viable national defense strategy leads us to fulfill this national defense option, even at the cost of total annihilation. Similarly, in Encounters with Kenneth Burke, William Rueckert describes the deleterious import of man’s “use,” and “mis-use,” of language on the environment: “it is humans’ capacity for symbolic action that makes it possible for them to study, master, manipulate, transform, and destroy ecosystems” (174). This notion of language as symbolic motivator is expressed by Burke himself: “There is a kind of ‘terministic compulsion’ to carry out the implications of one’s terminology” (19). In essence, the way we talk and write about nature will create motivating “implications” in our relationship with nature. In this poem, Frost’s vocabulary displays a detached, impersonal, and materialistic view of nature that can be regarded as symptomatic of the “perfectionist” will internal to humanity in the modern era, which has allowed men to justify the destruction and consumption of natural resources as the necessary means for the advancements in technology, industry, and overall “progress.”

SEPARATION IN FROST’S WORDS

Frost’s language, particularly his choices in words, is both concrete and opposing in its descriptive articulations. Figuratively speaking, if words were paint and poems paintings, this poem would be a modernist piece of broad brush strokes — things are as they are with underlying tensions of black and white. The poem contains subtly demarcated dichotomies that act to impose tension, which culminates in the repetitive couplet at the end of the poem. It is the repetitive couplet at the end of the poem, “the miles to go,” which cuts through these binary opposites and brings the reader a sense of fulfillment, a sense that in this world of black and white, right and wrong, night and day, there is restful “sleep” at the end of the journey, but one must strive to get there.

The first dichotomy is found in the separation of civilization and nature, the “village” in opposition to the “woods.” This separation sets up a barrier that preoccupies the speaker’s thoughts. Nature, in the mindset of the speaker, is demarcated by boundaries of ownership:

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow. (1-4)

This idea of separation and ownership is later strengthened when the speaker stops and notices that there is not a “farmhouse near.”

The second dichotomy is found in the binary opposites of life and lifelessness. The rider, “horse,” and owner of the “woods” are the only things described in personal terms. In contrast, nature is depicted as inanimate and lifeless. The “woods” and “frozen lake” are simply written as “fill[ing] up with snow.” It is noteworthy that the horse is given the personal pronoun “He” and is personified as “He” seems to “ask” whether “there is some mistake.” Upon consideration, the horse becomes a means to an end for the speaker. The horse is essentially the rider’s vehicle for attaining the “promises” that are “miles” away. With this in mind, the horse becomes an extension of the speaker’s own thoughts in the anticipation of pushing on and moving forward. The horse never really “ask[s] if there is some mistake,” it is only the speaker’s thoughts projected onto the horse:

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
.....
He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake. (5-7, 9-10)

This personification and projection of thought magnify the separation between the speaker and his surrounding natural environment. He, with his horse, or rather vehicle of “progress,” appears to be the only living things around — the only other sound is that “Of easy wind and downy flake.” (12); this idea of silence and sound is another dichotomy found within the poem.

One of the last opposing elements of the poem is found in the setting, which takes place on “The darkest evening of the year,” an implied winter solstice⁴ as opposed to a summer solstice. All of these dichotomies act as verbal polarities that help to create a tension within the poem, which is ultimately resolved by the speaker in the final stanza, in the striving to keep his “promises.” The repetitive couplet in the final quatrain cuts through the binary elements of the poem and brings a sense of closure. The reader is subtly told by the poem that in a world of black and white, mine and not-mine, nature and civilization — “sleep” is the ultimate reward at the end of the journey.

CONCLUSION

As humanity continues to journey on, questions arise as to how nature is supposed to be regarded. How are we to “progress” and simultaneously preserve ecological harmony with nature? Frost’s poem, specifically in how we read its tempo and structure, partially answers these questions. The rhyme scheme, like the structured background beat of a drum that keeps a 4/4 tempo of a musical piece, is played out within an iambic tetrameter rhythm — unstressed, stressed, unstressed, stressed The tempo of Frost’s poem is smooth and free flowing, due in part to the colloquial tone of voice Frost creates in his choice of words. This tempo and tone creates a feeling of ease and peaceful serenity. The end-stopped lines, at the end of each stanza, give the reader a feeling that the speaker, narrating the event in present tense, takes little pauses between explicating his experience of “stopping in the woods.” It is as if the speaker is somehow absorbing the moment of just being in nature. In these momentary pauses of reflection, Frost shows us how we reconnect with nature. In these moments, humanity comes to understand that he, like every other creature, is a part of this ecosystem, and with conscious

awareness of this fact, we can begin to work towards a “promising” relationship of balanced needs — both of humanities and natures.

Notes

¹ In parts of the paper I retain the use of “man” to refer to “humanity,” merely to maintain consistency with Burke’s own usage in “Definition of Man.”

² This form gained literary prominence in 1859 when Edward FitzGerald published his English translation of Omar Khayyam’s poem entitled “Rubaiyat,” written between the late eleventh and early twelfth century (Sufistic Quatrains of Omar Khayyam). Literary figures such as Swinburne, Rossetti, Twain, Riley, T.S. Eliot, Pound, and many others read Fitzgerald’s “Rubaiyat.” (See A. J. Arberry’s The Romance of the Rubaiyat and also Vinnie-Marie D’Ambrosio’s Eliot Possessed: T.S. Eliot and FitzGerald’s Rubaiyat).

³ The line may allude to the “Rubaiyat,” which was written by Omar Khayyam who was renowned as an astronomer/poet. The setting of the original “Rubaiyat” takes place on the New Year, which also may account for Frost’s description of a winter solstice setting.

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