

The Darkling Thrush

Paul Kelly

I leant upon a coppice gate
When frost was spectre-grey
And winter's dregs made desolate
The weakenin' eye of day
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres
And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires

The land's sharp features seemed to be
The century's corpse outleant
His crypt the cloudy canopy
The wind his death-lament
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry
And every spirit upon Earth
Seemed fervourless as I

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small
In blast-beruffled plume
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom

So little cause for carollings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware